

FLAME / SHARING RESOURCE:

Theme: Aldonza/Dulcinea/ Don Quixote story from "Man of La Mancha"

FIRST PRESENTATION: ALDONZA/DULCINEA STORY

I. Introduction

The image of Don Quixote on his horse, readying himself to charge the windmill he believes to be a dragon, is an image often seen connected with ME. The Man of La Mancha is a wonderful story of unconditional love, and the transformation it can have on others. We can learn from the story, how we can apply it to our own situation.

In these presentations, the story from the musical "Man of La Mancha" is used to illustrate several points: first, this story is used to illustrate how our self-doubts can keep us from accepting the love of another - thus limiting our ability to truly love. The story also illustrates how the unconditional love of another can encourage us to leave our fears behind and risk becoming vulnerable and thus experiencing transformation, in ourselves and in our relationship.

II. Introduce Aldonza/Dulcinea Story

If you're not familiar with the story, allow us to set the scene. The musical is based on the timeless story about Don Quixote, an aging, self-proclaimed knight, who sets out with his squire, Sancho, on a quest to right the wrongs of the world. When they stop at a country inn, Don Quixote meets a woman named Aldonza and proclaims that she will be the lady to whom he will dedicate his quest. Judging that Aldonza is not a suitable name for someone so noble and beautiful, he chooses instead to call her Dulcinea, a name which means "sweet one".

Aldonza's reality, however, is far from that of a lady. She is a serving maid and part-time prostitute, engulfed with self-doubts that have been fueled by a life of abandonment and despair. She mocks Don Quixote's image of her as "My Lady" and refuses to believe in the goodness he sees within her. She simply has no idea how to accept the kindness and devotion Don Quixote is offering. Instead, she lashes out in anger, trying to convince him that she is not the Dulcinea he believes her to be.

The words of the song are on your handout. It's not easy to listen to this song. The language and tone are harsh - and Aldonza's anguish comes through powerfully in the shrillness of her voice and her scream in utter frustration at the end. So let's all listen now to the song Aldonza sings to Don Quixote as she refuses to accept herself as the Dulcinea of his dreams.

ALDONZA

from *Man of La Mancha*

My Lady!

I am not your lady. I am not any kind of a lady.

I was spawned in a ditch by a mother who left me there, naked and cold and too hungry to cry.

I never blamed her, I'm sure she left hoping that I'd have the good sense to die.

Then, of course, there's my father. I'm told that young ladies can point to their fathers with maidenly pride. Mine was some regiment here for an hour. I can't even tell you which side.

So, of course, I became as befitted my delicate birth, the most casual bride of the murdering scum of the earth . . .

And still thou art my Lady!

And still he torments me!

How should I be a lady? For a lady has modest and maidenly airs and a virtue I somehow suspect that I lack. It's hard to remember these maidenly airs in a stable laid flat on your back.

Won't you look at me, look at me. God, won't you look at me. Look at the kitchen-slut reeking of sweat, born on a dung heap to die on a dung heap, a strumpet men use and forget . . .

If you feel that you see me not quite at my virginal best, cross my palm with a coin and I'll willingly show you the rest . . .

Never deny thou art Dulcinea.

Take the clouds from your eyes and see me as I really am.

You have shown me the sky, but what good is the sky to a creature who'll never do better than crawl? Of all the cruel devils who badgered and battered me, you are the cruelest of all!

Can't you see what your gentle insanities do to me? Rob me of anger and give me despair.

Blows and abuse I can take and give back again, tenderness I cannot bear. So don't reach out to me when your sweet 'Dulcinea' you call. I am only Aldonza. I'm no one, I'm nothing at all!

Now and forever thou art my Lady Dulcinea.

III. Reaction to Song

Most of us judge ourselves to be better than Aldonza, but at some level we can all relate to her inability to believe she was worthy of love and devotion. Each of us has missed the mark at one time or another; none of us is truly the hero or the heroine of our dreams. This experience of not living up to our own expectations or the expectations of others is universal and part of our life journey. Though the words of the song are troubling and may seem difficult to relate to, further reflection may help us discover how certain lines in the song align with our own poor self-image.

IV. How the story helps us see our own self-doubts

How do I see myself as Aldonza? What words of the song affected me most? This section is especially important to show how, even with initial negative feelings in reaction to this story, if we open our hearts and minds, we can all come to see ourselves as Aldonza. (i.e. we all have self-doubts)

"Take the clouds from your eyes and see me as I really am." When our image of ourselves doesn't match what we think our spouse sees, we can't trust that the love being offered is really for us. We long to be loved as we are...but we're afraid to reveal who we are for fear of losing the respect of our spouse.

"... abuse I can take and give back again, tenderness I cannot bear..." How many of today's popular TV shows are filled with put-downs that may seem typical in marriages? Some of us find it easier to accept and believe criticism (and dish it out in return) than to accept and believe tender praise from our spouse. We may feel vulnerable showing our own tender side. It's easier to hide behind thick armor.

"What good is the sky to a creature who'll never do better than crawl..."

Even high-achievers see flaws in themselves and judge they'll never measure up at times.

"...(For a lady has modest and maidenly airs) and a virtue I somehow suspect that I lack.." Some of us question whether we measure up as far as our masculinity or femininity and all that goes with our sexuality. This line might apply to the way we see ourselves fulfilling expectations as husbands and wives.

"I know that I am nothing at all!" When we are weighed down with judgments that we have failed to provide what we think our spouse or family needs, we may be unable to see our own goodness and may judge ourselves worthless.

Dialogue question: What are my thoughts and judgments as I hear this song? How did I feel as I heard this reading/song just now? (or for the 1st time on our Marriage Encounter?) 10/10

Open sharing questions:

- The story helps us see our own self doubts. How do I see myself as Aldonza?
- What words of the song affected me most?
- What words of the song can I most relate to, and how do they help me see my self-doubts?

(This section is especially important to show how, even with initial negative feelings in reaction to this story, if we open our hearts and minds, we can all come to see ourselves as Aldonza. i.e. we all have self doubts.)

SECOND PRESENTATION: STORY OF TRANSFORMATION - DULCINEA

V. The story of transformation in our relationship

On the Marriage Encounter, the story of Aldonza/Dulcinea and Don Quixote will continue when we get to the Risk presentation. It's important to understand the flow from Encounter with Self to Risk and how the story teaches the experience of transformation. In Encounter with Self, the story helps us get in touch with our own self-doubts and how we let those self-doubts limit our ability to love ourselves and to love others (our spouse). In Risking to Trust we learn that to get beyond our self-doubts, we need to trust in our spouse's love, and risk sharing our most vulnerable feelings with him/her. When we do that, and experience the love and acceptance of our spouse, we experience greater intimacy in our relationship. When we allow ourselves to be loved by our spouse, we are transformed into the person our spouse (and God) sees in us. We are transformed from seeing ourselves as Aldonza, to the Dulcinea that our spouse sees in us.

As we left the story in Encounter with Self, Aldonza was rejecting Don Quixote's vision of her as his "sweet Dulcinea". Aldonza continued to resist his attempts to treat her like a lady or to see herself as his beautiful Dulcinea. Yet Don Quixote has persistently reflected back to her the nobility and beauty he sees in her. The song we are about to play also comes from the musical, "Man of La Mancha". In this scene, Don Quixote is on his deathbed. He is broken and confused, convinced by his family that it is madness to ride around the countryside pretending to be a knight. Aldonza has heard that Don Quixote is dying and she comes to see him. Through his belief in her, she has come to see herself through his eyes and to believe in her own goodness. Now transformed into his lady, Dulcinea, she is strong enough to reach out to Don Quixote in return – to love him and affirm him and help him see his own goodness. She pleads with him to remember – and repeats the words he used to inspire her. He dies, not as a broken man, but transformed once more into a noble knight, believing in his dream.

DULCINEA

from the death scene in Man of La Mancha (play from CD or iTunes)

"Please ... try to remember ... you looked at me and you called me by another name ... Dulcinea, Dulcinea. Once you found a girl and called her Dulcinea. When you spoke the name, an angel seemed to whisper, 'Dulcinea, Dulcinea.'
Dulcinea, Dulcinea ... Won't you please bring back the dream of Dulcinea? Won't you bring me back the bright and shining glory of Dulcinea, Dulcinea?"

"Perhaps ... perhaps it was not a dream."

"You spoke of a dream ... and about the 'quest' ..."

"The quest ... the words ... tell me, tell me the words."

"To dream the impossible dream ... but they're your own words ... to fight the unbeatable foe ... don't you remember? to bear with unbearable sorrow ... you must remember! to run where the brave dare not go."

"To right the unrightable wrong ...[Yes!] To love pure and chaste from afar.. [Yes!] To try when your arms are too weary, to reach the unreachable star!"

"Thank you, my Lord."

"But this is not seemly, my Lady. On thy knees to me?"

"My Lord, you're not well!"

"Not well? What is illness to the body of a knight errant? What matter wounds? For each time he falls, he shall rise again! And woe to the wicked! Sancho!"

"Here, your grace!"

"My armor, my sword!"

"More misadventure ... "

"Adventures, old friend. Oh, the trumpets of glory now call me to ride. Yes, the trumpets are calling to me. And wherever I ride, ever staunch at my side, my squire and my lady shall be. I am I, Don Quixote, the Lord of La Mancha; our destiny calls and we go. And the wild winds of fortune shall carry us onward ... Withersoever they blow ... onward to glory I go."

"My Lord!"

VI. Response to Song

Don Quixote offered his love to a person who repeatedly turned away from him, yet he never gave up. Through his persistent, unconditional love, Aldonza was transformed and became the lady he saw in her. Aldonza also took a risk in deciding to visit Don Quixote. She could not be sure how she would be received after repeatedly rejecting him – or if he would even recognize her; but she was able to make herself vulnerable to Don Quixote because she trusted in his goodness and love.

Because unconditional love is the foundation of our committed relationship, an even more profound transformation is possible for us. When I risk to share my deepest feelings and trust in the love and goodness of my spouse, our unconditional love for each other allows us to lift each other up, to become who God wants us to be. To truly believe in yourself, you have to experience being loved. You have to believe in the goodness your spouse sees in you – and their unconditional love for you – and risk revealing yourselves to each other. This is the power of unconditional love – to look at a person, and, even knowing their faults, recognize the nobility in their soul and their worth before God. This is a love that can bring about transformation, because when you believe in your own goodness and beauty, you blossom. We have the power to bring about this transformation in our spouse and we offer that gift of transformation to the couples.

Dialogue question: How has your love affirmed me? WAMFAT? Or: In what area do I most need your affirmation/unconditional love right now? HDIFSTWY? 10/10

Open sharing questions:

- What does this idea of transformation mean to me?
- How have I been transformed by the love of my spouse?

THIRD PRESENTATION: TO DREAM THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

VII. The Impossible Dream

Think back to your wedding day and all of the dreams you had as you walked down the aisle for the very first time as husband and wife - dreams filled with joy and laughter and children and a wonderful life together. Now think about the path your life has taken since that day. Have you been able to realize any of your dreams, or have some fallen by the wayside as you've confronted the distractions surrounding you in 'Today's World'? Did your dreams start to fade? Did you perhaps even begin to believe that those dreams were impossible, simply naïve flights of fancy that could not be sustained in the real world? Did your Marriage Encounter help you to rekindle some of those dreams as you wrote and dialogued and listened with your hearts? Were you able to rediscover that same incredible person you walked down that aisle with at the beginning of your own quest for love and happiness? Are some of those beautiful hopes and dreams once again alive in you – and are there many more dreams still to be ignited through your beautiful, unconditional love? As we consider these questions in our minds let's turn our attention now to someone else who dared to dream - Don Quixote

Don Quixote was a dreamer, an idealist. He could see beauty where others only saw filth. He saw castles where others saw a run-down shack. Don Quixote believed that truth, beauty and justice were worth fighting for. His spirit was full of hope and passion for his quest to right the wrongs of the world. Others thought he was crazy. In a world full of cynicism, despair and hopelessness, he was scorned because he dared to dream. He was scorned because he dared to bring hope to those who were hopeless.

Our challenge is to be Don Quixote to our spouse, to place no limits on our relationship. When we have the unconditional love of our spouse, a love that can transform us from the Aldonza we sometimes see ourselves as, to the Dulcinea our spouse sees us as, then our relationship is full of endless possibilities. We really can dream the impossible dream.

Dialogue questions: Do I let the cynicism of the world infect my attitude about our relationship (this is as good as it gets, why even try to be a better couple, why rock the boat, I'm comfortable with where we are now)? HDIFSTWY? Or, What are my dreams for us as a couple right now? HDIFAT? 10/10

Open sharing questions:

- Do I shy away from dreaming big (for us, for the world) because I fear disappointment?
- Do I let the cynicism of the world infect my attitude about changing the world?
- What does "dreaming the impossible dream" mean for us?

The Impossible Dream

From the Broadway Musical The Man of La Mancha

Lyrics by Joe Darion

To dream ... the impossible dream ...
To fight ... the unbeatable foe ...
To bear ... with unbearable sorrow ...
To run ... where the brave dare not go ...
To right ... the unrightable wrong ...
To love ... pure and chaste from afar ...
To try ... when your arms are too weary ...
To reach ... the unreachable star ...

This is my quest, to follow that star ...
No matter how hopeless, no matter how far ...
To fight for the right, without question or pause ...
To be willing to march into Hell, for a Heavenly cause ...

And I know if I'll only be true, to this glorious quest,
That my heart will lie will lie peaceful and calm,
when I'm laid to my rest ...
And the world will be better for this:
That one man, scorned and covered with scars,
Still strove, with his last ounce of courage,
To reach ... the unreachable star