

Story: Missed Lesson

April 7, 2024

1 John 1:1-2:2

John 20:19:31

Most of the birds of our island fly by themselves, or in a loose flock. Around Hilo we're mostly likely to see a pair of finches or a larger group of mynas flying together. Myna flocks tend to be rather chaotic, with birds crossing back and forth and no real attempt to build a formation and stay in it.

There's an exception to that, and it's the nene. I've mentioned nene school to you. I haven't told you about the origin of nene school, which goes back so far that nobody really knows when it started. The nene don't, and if the nene don't, I certainly don't.

The problem was that the nene liked to fly together and chat while they flew. They make that "Ne. Ne," sound as they go. In the days before the foundation of the nene school, however, the cheerful "Ne. Ne," would be interrupted by screeches and cries to veer off, and sometimes by the distressing sounds of wing feathers scraping over one another, and then the groans of pain and, of course, angry squawks of denunciation.

The problem, of course, was that nobody knew, when flying together, what any other goose would do, so they were making goose guesses. Actually, since there'd be more than one goose guessing, there'd be geese guesses. If one was young, you'd have gosling guesses. And if you had a visiting goose, there'd be guest goose guesses.

When one of these geese guesses was wrong, you'd get geese gripes.

When they founded the first nene school, everybody was eager to take part, and everybody came to the first class. And the second. And the third.

But one goose guessed wrong about when the fourth class was being held, and he missed it. He did show up for the fifth class, and, well, he made more goose guesses that goofed. The nene flying that day lost feathers, altitude, and tempers.

The teacher took him aside when class was over. She didn't ask him why he'd missed the previous class. She just told him that what he'd missed, he'd have to learn.

"This is why we started this school in the first place," she said. "We're learning to fly together, to fly the same speed at the same time holding the same distance. We're learning to be

predictable and trustworthy in our own flying so that we can trust what the other nene will do. No more goose guessing.”

So he stayed and flew, and this time he learned the things he’d missed from the previous lesson, and he learned the things he’d missed from the lesson he’d just taken but hadn’t learned anything because his goose guesses had gone so goofy.

There are plenty of things in our human lives that we do separately, each in our own way. But there are also lots of things that we do together. We need to know what our fellow Christians are going to do, and they need to know what we’re going to do, so that we make things happen together.

It goes better than geese guesses.

by Eric Anderson