

"If your brother sins against you"

Reading 1: Ez 33:7-9
 Reading 2: Rm 1:8-10

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 94:1-2. 6-9
 Gospel : Mt 18:15-20

Gospel Reading : Mt 18:15-20

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Meditation: What's the best way to repair a damaged relationship? Jesus offers his disciples spiritual freedom and power for restoring broken or injured relationships.

Don't brood over an offense - speak directly and privately

What can we learn from Jesus' instructions about how to mend a damaged relationship? If you feel you have been wronged by someone, Jesus says the first step is to speak directly but privately to the individual who has done the harm. One of the worst things we can do is brood over our grievance. This can poison our mind and heart and make it more difficult to go directly to the person who caused the damage.

Seek the help of wise Christians

If we truly want to settle a difference with someone, we need to do it face to face. If this fails in its purpose, then the second step is to bring another person or persons, someone who is wise and gracious rather than someone who is hot-tempered or judgmental. The goal is not so much to put the offender on trial, but to persuade the offender to see the wrong and to be reconciled. And if this fails, then we must still not give up, but seek the help of the Christian community. Note the emphasis here is on restoring a broken relationship by seeking the help of other Christians who hopefully will pray and seek a solution for reconciliation based on Christian love and wisdom, rather than relying on coercive force or threat of legal action, such as a lawsuit.

Pray for the offender - for healing and reconciliation

Lastly, if even the Christian community fails to bring about reconciliation, what must we do? Jesus seems to say that we have the right to abandon stubborn and obdurate offenders and treat them like social outcasts. The tax-collectors and Gentiles were regarded as "unclean" by the religious-minded Jews and they resorted to shunning them. However we know from the Gospel accounts that Jesus often had fellowship with tax-collectors (as well as other public sinners), ate with them, and even praised them at times! Jesus refuses no one who is open to receive pardon, healing, and restoration.

Set no obstacle in seeking to heal your brother's wound

When you are offended, are you willing to put aside your own grievance and injury in order to help your brother's wound? The Lord Jesus wants to set us free from resentment, ill-will, and an unwillingness to forgive. The love of Christ both purifies and sets us free to do good to all - even those who cause us grief. The call to accountability for what we have done and have failed to do is inevitable and we can't escape it, both in this life and at the day of judgement when the Lord Jesus will return. But while we have the opportunity today, we must not give up on praying for those who cause us offense. With God's help we must seek to make every effort to win them with the grace and power of God's healing love and wisdom. Do you tolerate broken relationships or do you seek to repair them as God gives you the opportunity to mend and restore what is broken?

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

1. Do you find it difficult to forgive? Is there space for reconciliation for broken relationship ?
2. Jesus says "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." What does this mean for us today?
3. Jesus uses the words "bind" and "Loose". What does it mean to bind and what does it mean to loose? What is your understanding of this?

"Lord Jesus, make me an instrument of your healing love and peace. Give me wisdom and courage to bring your healing love and saving truth to those in need of healing and restoration."