

Cycle A 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sunday September 10th, 2017

The Scriptures today challenge us to guide people back to the Lord. Jesus Himself, gives us a three step process with which to bring people back in union with Him and His Church. This three step process has its roots in the Jewish Law found in the book of Leviticus. Jesus tells us, **“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother.”** But, before we do this we have to know what we are talking about. Is this matter a sin or is it revolving around our own personal agendas. If it is our personal agenda, then it is the vice of pride, and we need to work on growing in the virtue of humility. However, if it is truly a sin then we need to know; is this a venial sin or a mortal sin? And, we need to honestly evaluate the relationship. Is the relationship solid or is it strained. If the relationship is solid we have an easier task of having a conversation with the person. If the relationship is strained then we must move slow and gentle with the conversation; building trust and dialogue. Jesus tells us the next step if it is needed. **“If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you so that every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.”** This step in the process reflects our communal nature as members of the Body of Christ. St Paul teaches us,

“When one part of the body suffers the whole body suffers, when one part of the body rejoices the whole body rejoices.” To be a witness means to be a Christian who shares the Truth of our faith in love, not condemnation.

And so we try to unfold the conversation once more making every effort to invite the person back into a right relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church. If this step does not work Jesus tells us, **“If he refuses to listen to them, tell the Church.”** And Jesus goes on to say, **“Amen I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”** Here we have Jesus giving authority to the ministerial priesthood of the Church to bind or loose sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Jesus even said today, **“If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector.** Does this mean we have given up on them? Of course not. Jesus, means that we are to pray for them and their conversion. Keep in mind that Jesus ate meals with tax collectors and sinners. So, Jesus has given us the model to invite people back into a right relationship with Him and His Church. Perhaps sharing a meal together is a foretaste of one day sharing the Eucharist together. Will all of this be easy? Of course not! Human relationships are inherently messy because all of us are sinners.

St Paul reminds us today, **“Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”**

The law of God is Love. St. Thomas Aquinas said in the Catechism, **“To love is to will the good of another.”** We do want what is good for people who are struggling with particularly difficult sins. We begin with love meaning to will the good of another.

Jesus Christ has given us the model to help bring loved ones back in union with Him and His Church. We do this with love willing the good of another.