

Living the Gospel in Everyday Life....



23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 4, 2011
Matthew 18:15-20



What's Going On Here?

GOSPEL: Jesus said to his disciples: "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. 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.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, 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, amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

COMMUNITY: WHO CARES? In today's Gospel, Matthew invites us into the intimate workings of the little community of believers, walking through their daily lives with Jesus. It is the perfect follow-up to his words last Sunday, when he called us to pick up our crosses and follow. Today's message is one of the "how-to's." Upon first hearing, we might immediately begin to justify our not wanting to engage in the one-on-one conversation about another's wrongdoing. How uncomfortable that would be! We might also be uncomfortable with the idea of prayerfully talking about it with another person and then the whole community. Big responsibility! Or maybe we'd like to adopt the individualistic attitude of our popular culture which tells us, "Mind your own business," or "Different strokes for different folks," or "As long as it doesn't affect me personally." But Jesus says that it *is* our business when a member of the community does wrong. It *is* our responsibility to help hold the community together. It *is* our call to enter into the process of reconciliation. It's a very challenging message indeed, but a message of love of neighbor rooted deeply in our Judeo/Christian heritage. If we feel the loss of community in our time, we must be a part of restoring it. How much do we care? Jesus cared passionately, so much so that he died caring and promised to be in our midst when we come together in prayer for the sake of reconciliation.

Questions For Reflection

- * *How would prayerful preparation make a difference in the process of reconciling with someone who has wronged me?*
- * *How does an altercation between me and another person affect the community? What difference does it make if we reconcile or not?*
- * *What is the value of seeing reconciliation as a process?*
- * *What is the importance of community and my part in holding it together?*