

The Pastor's Corner...

How to Forgive in the Truth

“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.” (Matthew 18: 10-11)

This Sunday’s Gospel offers us very practical rules of dealing with our brothers and sisters in the difficult situations when someone else did something wrong against us. Such a situation is the daily bread of our life. He calls us not to be indifferent in such situations: neither be inactive nor overreactive. There are far-reaching consequences in Jesus’ simple use of the word “brother” in this Sunday’s passage. Because if it is my brother who has sinned against me, then I must treat him in response as flesh of my flesh, loving him despite his sin as I love myself. The whole process that Jesus outlines here impresses us because of the considerable responsibilities that it places upon the offended party. Yes, the offended party. In a worldly perspective, a person sinned against is seen to have full freedom to respond in kind, to hold rancor, to be vindictive, or at least cut off the offending party forever with a clean conscience.

Not so in the family of Jesus: the aggrieved brother must ponder the situation and make every effort to “gain back” his brother. My own hurt, even if real and not just imagined, is no excuse for my rancor or indifference, which could result in the loss of the offending brother from Christ’s Body. As in all other respect, so too here: if I am a follower of Christ, it is Christ’s interests, and



my private concerns and grudges, that must between brothers determine my attitudes, words, and actions. It is also very clear, however, that reconciliation between brothers must take place on the basis of the truth. Jesus here calls a sin a sin, and the Catholic Church is not a mutual-admiration society. When I am sinned against, the Lord commands me to go and rebuke my brother for what he has done to me. Apparently, Jesus does not see this as haughty behavior incompatible with Christian humility.

Fr. Mark Jurzyk

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