



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Father Christopher Comerford
September 10, 2017 Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading I Ezekiel 33:7-9

Psalm 95:1-9

Reading II Romans 13:8-10

Gospel Mathew 18:15-20

Homily

I love how St. Paul sums up living out the law of God. There is one phrase, one that brings all the commandments of God together: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” It’s easy to say, but much harder to put into practice. We often become caught up in our own needs, our own wants, our own desires. To really give that love to someone else and to put the needs of others first is a great challenge. But it is a great thing to put into practice, and it takes a lot of practice. It really is the heart of living out that Gospel message: Love God and love our neighbor. Jesus said they are really two of the same thing.

And it may mean that someone will get an advantage over us when we are willing to sacrifice ourselves for others. It is really a challenge when it comes to having that great concern for other people, especially when they have gotten off track like when they hurt us, or someone they love — or when they are hurting themselves and they are caught up in these sins and do not want to do anything about it. It is easier for us to be quiet, but we are called to do more. Jesus showed us and even gave us a way to do this and how to deal with people, especially if they have done something against us.

I love how Jesus tells us to handle this: “If your brother sins against you, post on Facebook so everybody else can know.” Oh. That’s not what I read? That’s not what I read the first time? Huh. But that seems to happen, doesn’t it. It seems like when somebody hurts us we become frustrated with them and the first place we go is to Facebook and type that in. Or do we text-message someone, or make a phone call to someone and say, “Do you know what that person did to me?” No. That is not what we should do. Tell him his fault between you and him alone. Do it directly. Privately. It is so hard, such a challenge. It is tough love. But it must be done in that context of love, not in a way of getting even, not in a way of anger. It is really hard. We need to care what is best for them.

Now sometimes they are not going to listen. So what do we do? We bring in other people who know the situation. Other witnesses. Kind of like an intervention isn’t it, a way of letting them see that more than one person is seeing this — and then they may

be more open to the truth. Then sometimes the church is brought in, and sometimes you just have to walk away. You have tried everything that you can.

It is a real challenge to live this way. To really have that much caring and concern for people. Why? It's scary! They may react back at us and probably will. But we are called to do this. I love how God says to Ezekiel today, "You are the watchman of Israel today. You have to share this message and you need to tell someone that he needs to change and is doing the wrong thing. When you don't say anything to him, you are in just as much trouble. Wow. We do have responsibility to our brothers and sisters. We do have a challenge to call them to the love of God, and to seek the mercy that God wants to give. It is a challenge to put that into practice but it shows how connected that we are.

And Jesus goes even farther. If two or three of you on earth agree about anything and pray — it will be granted. Umm. That is great to know. Rein others into our prayers. Invite them to them to pray for the needs. Believe this. It's better when more people are praying than just if we are praying by ourselves. I think that is the lesson. Invite others to pray for your needs. When we bring these prayers together there is power in that. God has promised that. It makes a difference. And he goes even farther in his promise. When two or three are gathered together in my name and in the name of Jesus — he is there. Wow.

We know that today. We know that even with a small group together praying there is power. That is why prayer groups are so great. Jesus is right there. Should we pray by ourselves? Yes. But Jesus is not present in the same way. He is more present when we pray together. We need our brothers and sisters, we need that support to lift us up, to help us, to be there. Jesus truly listens. That's what gets us through. That's what gives us the strength to carry out the message to live in love, and the strength that we need to show that tough love to someone in our lives.

It is a deep message, a powerful message that we hear from Jesus today. Is there someone in our life who needs us but there is a block and it is almost like a wall? Is there someone for whom we need to bring healing in a relationship? Is there someone who is really damaging himself or herself and maybe we are called to help? Let's pray for that strength today. Let's pray to trust in the love that Jesus has and let's bring that prayer together so we can have that power that Jesus calls us to have.

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