

Sermon

- ◆ **First Reading:** *Ezekiel 33:7-9*
- ◆ **Second Reading:** *Romans 13:8-10*
- ◆ **Gospel:** *Matthew 18: 15-20*

IF YOUR BROTHER DOES SOMETHING WRONG, GO AND HAVE IT OUT WITH HIM, BETWEEN YOUR TWO SELVES. IF HE LISTENS TO YOU, YOU HAVE WON BACK YOUR BROTHER. IF HE DOES NOT LISTEN, TAKE ONE OR TWO OTHERS ALONG WITH YOU IF HE REFUSES TO LISTEN TO THESE, REPORT IT TO THE COMMUNITY, AND IF HE REFUSES TO LISTEN TO THE COMMUNITY, THEN TREAT HIM LIKE A PAGAN OR A TAX COLLECTOR.....

What was our Lord on about with the above teaching? FRATERNAL CORRECTION! When was the last time you heard anyone using that term? The year is 2020, there's so much going on all around us! In the midst of this Pandemic we can't even get everyone to be in agreement with the use of face covering in enclosed public places, there have been protests "NO ONE TELLS ME WHAT TO DO" ; generally we are now more aware of our rights as free born citizens in this part of the world, this is a good thing, but it can be distorted to suit ourselves ; how many times on the news do we hear of an allegation against a public figure, we hear ".....THESE ARE SERIOUS CHARGES BUT HE/SHE DENIES ANY WRONGDOING..." is it that we now live in a society where the mentality is "as long as I'm not caught, then I'll carry on doing what I know is not right.." a simple example ; board a London "Boris-Bus" from the middle, talk into your mobile phone as you board, pretend you are about to take out your oyster card to pay your bus fare, then don't bother, just go upstairs "AH HA! GOT AWAY WITH IT AGAIN" !!!! how would you go about confronting such a person who may have a knife or a needle in their inside pocket??

During this Pandemic certain multi millionaires have refused to pay their workers, their selfish stance is "....well! if they're not working, then why should I pay them?" no mercy shown! So how do you give a fraternal correction to such people?.....

The fraternal correction is a risky business, what seems to be getting in the way? Pride and ignorance I suppose, supported by our contemporary attitude “LEAVE ME ALONE, I’LL LIVE MY LIFE MY WAY, IT’S ALL ABOUT ME, MY-SELF AND I...” ; sadly Church life is not far behind, certain members of the clergy, bishops included, having already been seriously reprimanded for their conduct, continued to abuse their power, their funds and worst of all, minors, leaving behind a trail of great pain and woeful scandal, a sinful Church indeed, it’ll take decades to recover. Where the “fraternal correction” is concerned pope Francis remains very firm, his is a zero tolerance approach “those in a position of authority who abuse will be reported to civil authorities and dealt with, there will be no more cover ups, and no place to hide...”

“but” says you “the damage is already done” too true!

So what can we do, say, impose or organize regarding Our Lord’s teaching on “**THE BROTHER WHO DOES SOMETHING WRONG**” and needs to be corrected?, a person who drinks too much needs to be corrected, a person who deals in drugs needs to be corrected, or someone who constantly gets angry over trivial annoyances etc., yes! they all need to be corrected(easier said than done!!!)

How about you and me? If someone needed to confront you over a recurring unpleasant issue that has been noticed, what would it be?

We can only answer that individually. This is where an examination of conscience enters the arena of the human dark side ;

the brutal reality is, we could all do with the occasional fraternal correction, and the one (or ones) who confront us on the issue is doing us a great favour ; this is where we need to be humble and to listen, otherwise we are not recognizing what needs to be put right ;

Then, as believers, we need to invoke the Holy Spirit to help us deal with our weakness, shortcoming, sin, scandal, addiction etc.. the Holy Spirit is the spirit of Wisdom who has our best interests at heart, imagine that same Spirit saying to you “**BUT I WANT TO HELP YOU, I WANT TO HEAL YOU, I WANT YOU TO BE A BETTER PERSON**”

This is very much in line with the responsorial psalm **O THAT TO-DAY YOU WOULD LISTEN TO HIS VOICE! HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS** in this context “to become hardened” refers to ignoring the Spirit of Truth who, as already mentioned, has our best interests at heart ;

Unfortunately there’s no clear approach to the fraternal correction issue, perhaps if Our Lord was around to-day in a world that has become so convoluted and more than complicated, then perhaps He could, not water-down-his-own-teaching, but give it more emphasis on the importance of “becoming better thru’ the virtue of HUMILITY”.

I’ll leave you with an example, during the previous week we celebrated the memorials of ss.Monica(332 – 387) and her troublesome son, Augustine(354 – 430) ; as a young man he was irresponsible delving into “loose living” and ignoring all sound advice from those who approached him, he had gone wayward ; Monica, his mother, could see that her son basically was unhappy and in search of meaning to his life ; she prayed for her son, years passed, Monica continued to pray for him, her prayers were answered, at last Augustine discovered what he was looking for, he’s the one who said

LORD, YOU HAVE MADE US FOR YOURSELF, AND OUR HEARTS FIND NO REST, UNTIL WE REST IN YOU..” that discovery was accomplished by the power of the prayers of Monica, his mother.....

Perhaps with your best and most sincere intentions your recent fraternal correction to a loved one has “failed-to-ignite”, **DON’T DESPAIR, PRAY AGAIN, TRY AGAIN** ; healing, learning and trying to “get thru” takes **TIME, PRAYER & PERSEVERANCE.....**

Have to go now.....stay healthy, God bless

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