

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday September 6, 2026

It probably comes as no surprise to any of us that, even as Catholics, we don't all think alike. We have different personalities, different experiences and perspectives – we have different ways of seeing things. We don't always agree with one another—and sometimes we can see the very same situation quite differently.

There is something deeper that brings us together. We are all principled people, or we want to be principled people. All of us have certain principles and values by which we want to live.

- We want to be good people.
- We want to make good choices.
- We want our lives and our relationships to reflect something of what we believe.

Part of the reason we come here, part of the reason our faith matters to us, is that we look to God, to our Church – to our faith community (we look to one another) to help us form those values and, more importantly, to live by them.

One of the values Jesus places before us in today's Gospel is very practical for our everyday lives – **how do we treat one another when things go wrong?** Because having the same faith doesn't mean we will never disagree. Being Christians doesn't mean we will never disappoint or hurt one another. **In fact, Jesus seems to assume that we will. What matters – is what we do next.**

Jesus knows that wherever there are human beings—even good, faithful, loving human beings—there will eventually be misunderstandings, disappointments, hurt feelings and conflict. It happens in marriages and in families – we all know it does. It happens among friends – it happens at work and school and everywhere we are.

Jesus gives us some simple advice: *“If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone.”*

In other words, Christians should **talk to people, not about people.** **And yet, how often do we do exactly the opposite?**

Someone hurts us, frustrates us or disappoints us, and instead of speaking to that person, we speak to two or three other people about them. We tell our spouse – we call a friend – we send a text message. We find someone who will agree with us. And before long, something that might have been resolved through **one honest conversation** has become much bigger.

Jesus offers us a better way. Before we talk *about* someone, perhaps we might ask ourselves: **Have I talked to them?**

A second piece of wisdom we're offered in this Gospel that is just as important. Jesus tells us why we should have that conversation: "*If [that other person] listens to you, you have regained that one.*"

- Jesus doesn't say...then you'll prove that you were right.
- Or you'll have won the argument.

He says, you have regained your brother or sister. That's the goal. Christian confrontation isn't supposed to be about winning. It's supposed to be about reconciliation.

And so, before entering a difficult conversation, perhaps we ask ourselves **another question: Do I want to win—or do I want that person back – back in my life?**

Those really are very different goals. If I want to win, I go, I gather my evidence, I rehearse my arguments. I will make sure the other person knows exactly what they did wrong.

But if we want to regain our relationship, **WE LISTEN, WE ASK QUESTIONS, WE TRY TO UNDERSTAND BEFORE WE NEED TO BE UNDERSTOOD!** We might even open our hearts to the possibility that we misunderstood something.

We speak honestly, but gently – and in doing all this, we leave room for grace, for God to bring us back together.

There are practical things we might consider in what Jesus is telling us today.

- **FIRST, RELAX!** We're going to disagree and argue – it happens!
- **We talk to people** – we don't wallow in self-pity or give the silent treatment to others – that's not Christian.
- We may need time to let go of our anger – to prepare ourselves to speak the truth in charity.
- But we don't recruit an audience or build a team of people who agree with us.
- **Then we go privately** – it's always important to protect the dignity of others.
- Not every disagreement needs to become public knowledge.
- And we go... **prayerfully**.

Before the conversation, ask the Lord: *“Jesus, help me desire reconciliation more than vindication.”*

Friends, maybe there's someone in our lives right now whom we have been **talking about** rather than **talking to** – I can think of a few for myself.

Today's Gospel offers us all a challenge for the week ahead – Go and be reconciled! **Either lovingly address the issue with the person—or lovingly let it go.** But we don't keep feeding resentment by repeatedly **talking about someone** while we're never **speaking to them**. Jesus wants something better for us – He doesn't care about whether we're right or not. He wants us to always regain, maintain and strengthen the good relationships – the God-given relationships in our lives.