Wednesday of the Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mt* 18:15-20): 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."

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault… Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

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Today, in this short Gospel passage, the Lord teaches us three important ways of acting—ways that are often neglected.

First: understanding and correction of a friend or colleague. We are to approach them discreetly and personally ("just the two of you"), and speak with clarity ("reprove him") about the wrong path they may be taking, in the hope of helping them redirect their life. If this first effort fails, then we are called to bring along a companion—a trusted friend—who might help in leading that person to conversion. And if even this does not bear fruit, and their sin causes scandal, we must not be afraid to exercise prophetic and public witness. Today, that could take the form of a letter to the editor, a peaceful demonstration, or a bold sign held in public. This approach demands something not only of the person being corrected, but of the one doing the correcting. It is often uncomfortable, thankless, and difficult. That's why it's so tempting to choose what we mistakenly call "Christian charity"—which is often nothing more than escapism, convenience, cowardice, or a false tolerance. As Saint Bernard said, "The same punishment is reserved for those who do evil and for those who consent to it."

Second: every Christian has the right to seek from us, their priests, the forgiveness of God and His Church. A psychologist may, at a certain point, help calm someone's emotional state; a psychiatrist, through

medical means, may be able to treat a deep psychological disorder. These are good and useful, but not always sufficient. Only God can truly forgive, erase, forget, and destroy personal sin. And only the Church has been given the authority to bind or loose on earth—authority that echoes in Heaven. Through this Divine Mercy, a soul finds peace and begins to rediscover true happiness.

Third: in the hands and words of the priest lies the privilege of taking the bread for Jesus-Eucharist to truly become our food and life. But every disciple of the Kingdom can join with another—or better, with many others—and with fervor, faith, courage, and hope, enter into the world and help transform it in the true body of Jesus-Mystic. And in that communion of hearts, we can lift our voices to God the Father, who hears our prayers—for His Son has promised us: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “In that silence, He will listen to us; there He will speak to our soul, and there we will hear His voice.” (Saint Teresa of Calcutta)

- “Faith is not simply an individual decision. By its very nature, faith is open to the ‘We’ of the Church; it always takes place within her communion.” (Francis)

- “‘Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us,’ (Rom 8:34) is present in many ways to his Church: in his word, in his Church's prayer, ‘where two or three are gathered in my name,’ (Mt 18:20) in the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned, in the sacraments of which he is the author (...)” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 1373)