

Sunday 23rd (A) in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 18,15-20): Jesus said to his disciples, «If your brother or sister has sinned against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are in private, and if he listens to you, you have won your brother. If you are not listened to, take with you one or two others so that the case may be decided by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he still refuses to listen to them, tell it to the assembled Church. But if he does not listen to the Church, then regard such a one as a pagan or a publican. I say to you: whatever you bind on earth, heaven will keep bound; and whatever you unbind on earth, heaven will keep unbound.

»In like manner, I say to you: if on earth two of you are united in asking for anything, it will be granted to you by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered in my Name, I am there among them».

«Go and point out the fault when the two of you are in private»

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Today, the Gospel puts forward for consideration Jesus' advice to his disciples, then and now. In the community of the first Christians there were also faults and behaviors that are contrary to God's will. The final verse offers us the framework to solve the problems arisen, throughout history, within the Church: «For where two or three are gathered in my Name, I am there among them» (Mt 18:20). Jesus is present in all epochs of his Church, his “mystic Body”, invigorated by the constant action of the Holy Spirit. We are always brothers, whether our ecclesial community is a big or a small one.

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(Mt 18:15). How beautiful and truehearted is the fraternal relationship Jesus teaches us! In front of a fault against me or against someone else, I must beseech the Lord's grace to forgive, to understand and, finally, to try and rectify my brother.

Today it is not as easy as before, when the Church was less numerous. But, if we mull over these things in a direct dialogue with God, our Father, He will enlighten us and help us find, the time, the place and the right words for us to carry out our duty to help. It is important to purify our heart. St. Paul inspires us to correct our neighbor with a straight intention: «Brothers, even if a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one in a gentle spirit. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted» (Gal 6:1).

Our deep affection and humility will make us look for the gentleness. «Behave with maternal hands, with our mothers' infinite delicacy when they healed the wounds, large or small, of our children's plays and missteps» (St. Josemaria). This is how Jesus' Mother, and our Mother too, correct us, with stimulations to love more God and our brothers.