Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

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."

"Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone"

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Today, the Gospel suggests that we consider some of Jesus' recommendations to His disciples, both from those times and for all times. Even in the community of the early Christians, there were faults and behaviors contrary to God's will. The final verse provides the framework for resolving problems that arise within the Church throughout history: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them " (Mt 18:20). Jesus is present in every period of the life of His Church, His "Mystical Body", invigorated by the unceasing action of the Holy Spirit. We are always brothers and sisters, whether the community is large or small.

"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" (Mt 18:15). How beautiful and loyal is the fraternal relationship about which Jesus teaches us! When faced with an offense against me or someone else, I must ask the Lord for His grace to forgive, to understand, and ultimately, to try to correct my brother or sister.

Today, things are not as simple as when the Church was less numerous. But if we ponder our relationships in dialogue with our Heavenly Father, He will enlighten us to find the time, place, and appropriate words to fulfill our duty to help one another in a spirit of familial charity. It's crucial to purify our hearts. Accordingly, St. Paul encourages us to correct our neighbor with a righteous intent: "Brothers,

even if a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one in a gentle spirit, looking to yourself, so that you also may not be tempted" (Gal 6:1).

Our deep affection and humility will make us seek gentleness. "Go with a motherly hand, with the almost infinite tenderness shown by our own mothers, when they were treating the hurts and injuries, big or little, resulting from our childhood games and falls" (Saint Josemaría Escrivá). This is how the Mother of Jesus, and our Mother too, corrects us: with inspirations to love God and our brothers and sisters more deeply.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "In serious matters it is better to beg God humbly than to send forth a flood of words that will only offend the listeners and have no effect on those who are guilty" (Saint John Bosco)

- "It is important above all to prevent any clamor in the news and gossip in the community. This is the first thing, this must be avoided, to avoid wounding or killing the brother with words" (Francis)

- "The words bind and loose mean: whomever you exclude from your communion, will be excluded from communion with God; whomever you receive anew into your communion, God will welcome back into his. Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1445)