

September 10, 2023

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ez 33:7-9 | Rom 13:8-10 | Mt 18:15-20

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

Years ago, I was asked to take in a hound dog and I was happy to do so, but it wasn't until I brought the dog home that I discovered how adamantly opposed my husband was to the idea. When asked, he had never said "no," but he thought I should just know he didn't want the dog. Obviously, we needed to work on our communication skills! Proper communication and what it means to love in relationship are what come to mind when I hear the start of today's Gospel. Jesus is instructing us on what to do when another angers, hurts, or offends us. Not surprisingly, it doesn't include calling our sister or best friend to vent, or posting about it on social media, regardless of how vaguely we word the situation. Instead we are to go to that person directly and "tell him his fault between you and him alone." If they listen, we have won them over. How many times have others hurt us but we never bother to tell them? How often do we simply assume the other person knows they have done us wrong? We owe it to one another to be honest and upfront - to give the other person a chance to apologize and us a chance to extend forgiveness. We also owe it to one another to be willing to receive *them* in charity, open-hearted, when they come to us to speak of *our* faults.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

In the same way that the Gospel addresses speaking truth to another and "winning them over," the prophet Ezekiel recounts the Lord's instruction to him that he has a duty to "speak out to dissuade the wicked from his way." This, of course, was the role and mission of the prophets. To make known the word and law of God and call the people to respond. A prophet warned, counseled, taught, and encouraged. They called the people to obedience to God, denouncing idolatry, injustice, and empty rituals. Jesus himself came as priest, prophet, and king and by our baptism, "the whole People of God participates in these three offices of Christ and bears the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from them." (CCC 783) Through the centuries, people have tried to do this in various ways - from passing laws to standing on street corners with signs. But let's remember that even as we are meant to "speak out," we are also meant to listen. We too must be re-converted to the truth when we sin; we too must be dissuaded from our wicked ways. This is how we best fulfill our prophetic mission.

PRAY Witnessing to Christ in today's world sometimes feels overwhelming or hopeless. Spend some concerted time in prayer with the words from today's psalm: "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."