



## Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time A September 6, 2020

- ◆ **Confronting an issue rather than letting it stew within us**
- ◆ **Three stories of how difficult events can lead to positive, unexpected results**
- ◆ **Season of Creation**

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us how we are to act when someone wrongs us. He says:

*"If your brother/sister commits some wrong against you, go and point out his fault but keep the matter between the two of you."*

Is this what we normally do? Probably not. All too often, we go to *others* and talk about the issue, seeking to get them on our side. While it is understandable that we would do this, we can see from the above verse of Scripture that such action is a direct violation of God's Word. When we do not act according to God's Word in this area of our lives, we can allow a big resentment to grow within us. This is unhealthy emotionally, spiritually and even physically.

Going directly to the person who has wronged us is usually not easy especially if we do not have a cordial relationship with that person. People say to me, "I hate confrontation" or "I don't like to make waves." Most of us are like that, but if we are to have healthy relationships in our home, parish and workplace, we sometimes have to muster up the courage to confront the person who has wronged us or hurt us. (We do need to remember that sometimes we may *feel hurt* even though we have not been wronged. Jesus frequently said things to the Pharisees that must have deeply hurt them, but he had not wronged them. Sometimes our feelings get hurt when someone does not give us enough attention or speaks some truth we do not want to hear. In such situations, we may be hurt but certainly not wronged.)

But assuming someone has not only hurt us but also *wronged* us, what should be our *Christian* response? Jesus tells us to go directly to that person. As we consider confronting the person who has wronged us, we may want to keep the following in mind.

- Pray before you go. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to say what you need to say but in a gentle and non-offensive way. Be sure that your attitude is not one that seeks to bring down the other person a peg or two. Such an attitude will only make the situation worse.
- Remember: timing is important. All too often, our efforts to right a wrong are messed up because our timing is bad. When possible, we should say to the other person, "I need to talk to you about something. What would be a good time for you?" It is

usually a bad idea to do this over the telephone. *Writing* out what we want to say is often a very good idea, especially if we think we are going to get flustered and not say what we want to say, or say it in such a way that we only add more hurt to the situation. Commenting on today's Gospel, Fr. Sylvester O'Flynn writes:

*Before we confront someone we should:*

- *Pray for the light of truth (the whole truth may not be on our side).*
- *Pray for tactful gentleness that will heal rather than wound. Our whole aim should be to heal a wounded or broken relationship and not to score a victory.*

### Dealing with Hurt Feelings

As I said above, sometimes we feel hurt by another even though we have not been wronged. Do we bring the hurt to the offender or do we try to deal with it ourselves? Each of us will have to decide what is the best and most Christian way to deal with such a situation.

Sometimes the problem is ours and we need to own it and deal with it. For example, the person may have expressed opinions that we did not like or even resented. He/she may have spoken a truth that convicted us in some way. In both cases, the problem is obviously ours and we need to deal with it. On another level, someone may have made a false accusation or said something in a harsh and offensive way. In that case, we have to decide how to handle it. Ideally, if the offender is a mature person, we should feel confident that we can bring our hurt to him/her and resolve it in a way that would make Jesus smile and not cry.

While we may judge rightfully that there is no point in approaching the offender, it should not be *simply* because we do not like the discomfort of confrontation, and we instead opt for a false shallow peace. Often, the refusal to confront is a failure to love. In a mature Christian community or family, people choose to deal with hurt feelings because they truly *care* about the community and family that they belong to. Some wise person once said: "All that is needed for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing." Unfortunately, all too often in our families, parishes and workplaces, we allow the evil of dissent and resentment to grow because we do not have the courage and true love to confront a situation and deal with it as best we can.

Having said all of the above, I understand the resistance to go and talk to the offender because he/she is simply impossible to talk to and is the type who thinks he/she is always right. In such

situations, we have to learn to live with what cannot be changed. Certainly, what can *always* be changed is *our* attitude. Our constant loving attitude may in time soften the heart of even the most difficult person.

If we want a simple way to test or gauge the *quality* of our Christianity or to check our personal maturity, we only need look at how we deal with hurts.

A postscript to the above words by Jesus is to state that "anonymous letters" are not the way to deal with hurts. Over the years, I, like all Pastors, have received anonymous letters. My reaction is to trash them. I think Jesus would agree.

I do not know who wrote the following:

### **GOOD REASONS TO LET GO OF A RESENTMENT**

*The moment you begin resenting a person, you become his/her slave.*

*They control your dreams, disturb your digestion, rob you of your peace of mind and goodwill, and take away the pleasure of your work.*

*They ruin your religion and nullify your prayers.*

*You cannot take a vacation without bringing them along.*

*They destroy your freedom of mind and hound you, wherever you go.*

*There is no way to escape the person you resent.*

*They are with you when you are awake; invade your privacy when you sleep.*

*They are close beside you when you eat, when you drive your car, and when you are on the job.*

*You can never have efficiency or happiness.*

*They influence even the tone of your voice.*

*They require you to take medicine for indigestion, headaches, and loss of memory.*

*They even steal your last moment before you go to sleep.*

*So, if you want to be a slave, continue to harbor resentment.*

### **Admonishing the Sinner**

One of the *Seven Corporal Works of Mercy* is *Admonish the Sinner*. This is what Ezekiel in the first reading today is urging us to do. In fact, he tells us that if we do not try to stop someone who is walking down a wrong path, we will be held responsible for his/her sins.

Now THAT is a tough Scripture to act on. Who wants to go to some individual and point out his/her sins, especially when we realize that all of us are sinners? Christian charity should move us to show concern for people walking down a destructive path, such as those dealing with the problem of excessive use of alcohol, drugs and food. Workaholism is also very destructive especially if one is married and has children. It frequently leads to divorce. Another example is injustice in the workplace. If we decide to talk to someone about what we perceive as destructive or immoral behavior, we should go to that person with love and

concern. But first, we would do well to pray to the Holy Spirit to grant us wisdom and courage and love to confront the person who is clearly on a destructive and dangerous path.

A simple example of someone acting on today's first reading would be a parent who explains to a child that stealing is wrong and then sends the child back to the store to return the stolen item.

### **High-tech Psalm**

The Lord is my programmer, I shall not crash.  
He installed his software on the hard disk of my heart;

all of His commands are user-friendly;

His directory guides me to the right choices  
for His name's sake.

Even though I scroll through the problems of life,

I will fear no bugs, for He is my backup;

His password protects me;

He prepares a menu before me

in the presence of my enemies;

His help is only a key stroke away.

Surely goodness and mercy will follow me

all the days of my life,

and my file will be merged with His

and saved forever.

### **Month-long Season of Creation**

I must confess that I had not heard about the Annual Season of Creation until a young man, Ryan Hatfield, currently in our RCIA program, sent me some information. Perhaps it is unintentionally one of the Church's best kept secrets. Or, more likely, something I assume that you and I have not noticed.

### **What is the Season of Creation?**

The Season of Creation is a month-long prayerful observance that calls the planet's 2.2 billion Christians to pray and care for God's creation. It's a time to reflect on our relationship with the environment—not just "distant" nature, but crucially, the place where we live—and the ways in which our lifestyles and decisions as a society can endanger both the natural world and those inhabiting it, both humans and other creatures.

The ecumenical steering committee that plans and promotes the season each year puts it this way:

The Season of Creation is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together. During the Season of Creation, we join our sisters and brothers in the ecumenical family in prayer and action for our common home.

It's a time of prayer, contemplation and, increasingly, calls to action.

The Season of Creation is supported by a number of leading Christian organizations, including the World Council of

Churches, Christian Aid, the Lutheran World Federation, the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, the Global Catholic Climate Movement and the Vatican's Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development. Each sits on the Season of Creation steering committee.

### **The Season of Creation spans 34 days**

It begins September 1, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. It concludes October 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology.

As it happens, the season aligns with the fall harvest season—a time when the state of the Earth might be front of mind for many people.

Just months after publishing his 2015 encyclical “*Laudato Si'*: On Care for Our Common Home,” Pope Francis formally added the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation to the Catholic calendar as an annual day of prayer. And last year, he officially invited Catholics to celebrate the full season.

“Now is the time to rediscover our vocation as children of God, brothers and sisters, and stewards of creation. Now is the time to repent, to be converted and to return to our roots,” he wrote in a letter. “We are beloved creatures of God, who in his goodness calls us to love life and live it in communion with the rest of creation. For this reason, I strongly encourage the faithful to pray in these days that, as the result of a timely ecumenical initiative, are being celebrated as a Season of Creation.”

The Catholic Conference of Bishops has a great one back/front page on The Season of Creations, Sept. 1-Oct. 4, with practical suggestions on what families and communities can do.

<https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/upload/WDPCC-Bulletin-Insert.pdf>

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### **A Beautiful Reflection on Creation**

In the September/October 2020 edition of Maryknoll Magazine, there is a beautiful reflection of creation. If a little tight on time, please jump forward to the last stanza where the mystic and scientist meet on the mountain.

### ***The First Sacrament by Joseph R. Veneroso***

*Let all that is and was and will ever be  
praise God who made everything  
not just to reveal glory and power and majesty  
but also to share love and life—eternally.*

*In him all things in heaven and on earth,  
the visible and the invisible  
were created through him and for him.*

*He is before all else that is  
and in him we live and move and have our being:  
the farthest galaxy and nebula no more nor less  
than the peacock, the peony and the porcupine.*

*Creation, then, is the first sacrament  
instituted by Christ, through Christ  
and, finding its fulfillment only in Christ,  
the power that compels the heavens  
to declare and the seas and all they contain  
to proclaim God's grace to all.*

*And so it shall be on that day  
the mystic and the scientist shall meet  
on the very same mountaintop,  
having climbed up from opposite sides  
by very different paths over many years.  
They shall stand regarding one another in silence,  
suspicion giving way to admiration  
as they exchange gifts  
till arm in arm they descend  
looking at the world and one another  
with new eyes.*

***O let there be light!***

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Have a blessed week,

*Fr. Aaron*