

SUNDAY GOSPEL BIBLE SHARING



Wednesday September 6th for the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

OPENING PRAYER : : Loving God, you created us for a relationship with you. When we stray from you, you call us back. When our brothers and sisters begin to follow a sinful lifestyle, you call us to help them see their erring ways. Give us the wisdom and courage to help each other to follow your ways. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.

READING OF THE ASSIGNED GOSPEL

- In the words of Saint Benedict, “Listen with the ears of your heart.”
- Please note a word, phrase, or verse that seemed to really catch your notice.
- A volunteer slowly read aloud today’s passage Afterwards, we have a few minutes of silent reflection.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

Matthew 18:15-20

Jesus said to his disciples:

12g "What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray?

13 And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. 14 In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.

15h 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.

16* i 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.’

17j 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.

18* k 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.

19* l 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.

20* m For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

* [18:1–35] This discourse of the fourth book of the gospel is often called the “church order” discourse, but it lacks most of the considerations usually connected with church order, such as various offices in the church and the duties of each, and deals principally with the relations that must obtain among the members of the church. Beginning with the warning that greatness in the kingdom of heaven is measured not by rank or power but by childlikeness (Mt 18:1–5), it deals with the care that the disciples must take not to cause the little ones to sin or to neglect them if they stray from the community (Mt 18:6–14), the correction of members who sin (Mt 18:15–18), the efficacy of the prayer of the disciples because of the presence of Jesus (Mt 18:19–20), and the forgiveness that must be repeatedly extended to sinful members who repent (Mt 18:21–35).

* [18:15–20] Passing from the duty of Christian disciples toward those who have strayed from their number, the discourse now turns to how they are to deal with one who sins and yet remains within the community. First there is to be private correction (Mt 18:15); if this is unsuccessful, further correction before two or three witnesses (Mt 18:16); if this fails, the matter is to be brought before the assembled community (the church), and if the sinner refuses to attend to the correction of the church, he is to be expelled (Mt 18:17). The church’s judgment will be ratified in heaven, i.e., by God (Mt 18:18). This three-step process of correction corresponds, though not exactly, to the procedure of the Qumran community; see 1QS 5:25–6:1; 6:24–7:25; CD 9:2–8. The section ends with a saying about the favorable response of God to prayer, even to that of a very small number, for Jesus is in the midst of any gathering of his disciples, however small (Mt 18:19–20). Whether this prayer has anything to do with the preceding judgment is uncertain.

* [18:15] Your brother: a fellow disciple; see Mt 23:8. The bracketed words, against you, are widely attested but they are not in the important codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus or in some other textual witnesses. Their omission broadens the type of sin in question. Won over: literally, “gained.”

* [18:16] Cf. Dt 19:15.

* [18:17] The church: the second of the only two instances of this word in the gospels; see note on Mt 16:18. Here it refers not to the entire church of Jesus, as in Mt 16:18, but to the local congregation. Treat him...a Gentile or a tax collector: just as the observant Jew avoided the company of Gentiles and tax collectors, so must the congregation of Christian disciples separate

itself from the arrogantly sinful member who refuses to repent even when convicted of his sin by the whole church. Such a one is to be set outside the fellowship of the community. The harsh language about Gentile and tax collector probably reflects a stage of the Matthean church when it was principally composed of Jewish Christians. That time had long since passed, but the principle of exclusion for such a sinner remained. Paul makes a similar demand for excommunication in 1 Cor 5:1–13.

* [18:18] Except for the plural of the verbs bind and loose, this verse is practically identical with Mt 16:19b and many scholars understand it as granting to all the disciples what was previously given to Peter alone. For a different view, based on the different contexts of the two verses, see note on Mt 16:19.

* [18:19–20] Some take these verses as applying to prayer on the occasion of the church's gathering to deal with the sinner of Mt 18:17. Unless an a fortiori argument is supposed, this seems unlikely. God's answer to the prayer of two or three envisages a different situation from one that involves the entire congregation. In addition, the object of this prayer is expressed in most general terms as anything for which they are to pray.

* [18:20] For where two or three...midst of them: the presence of Jesus guarantees the efficacy of the prayer. This saying is similar to one attributed to a rabbi executed in A.D. 135 at the time of the second Jewish revolt: "...When two sit and there are between them the words of the Torah, the divine presence (Shekinah) rests upon them" (Pirqê 'Abôt 3, 3).

Thoughts and reflection on the Gospel Passage

QUESTIONS FOR SHARING

1. Have you ever tried to intervene in the life of another adult who was on a destructive path or was about to make a decision that you believed would have destructive consequences? If so, how was that experience for you?
2. When someone hurts us, we have three options. • Go to the offender, as today's Gospel tells us. • Complain about the offender to someone else. • Keep the hurt inside and do nothing about it. Which option are you most likely to follow? Why?
3. If you have grown in your ability to confront another, what has helped you grow in this way?
4. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

Commentary

In this Gospel, Jesus outlines for his disciples what one must do if a brother in the community sins against him. He gives three steps: • The first step is to reach out to the brother, state the offense, and allow the brother to privately repent of the wrong he has done. Notice in the first step that one is not to go to others to complain about the offender. • If that does not work, the offended person should

take one or two other members of the community to help in a reconciliation effort. • If the second step does not work, the offender should be brought before the whole community. If he continues to be unrepentant, “treat him as you would a Gentile or tax collector,” i.e., as someone who has a disdain for the Gospel. Some scholars say that Matthew is telling his audience to excommunicate the unrepentant sinner. Others think that Jesus wants us to treat the sinner with unconditional love because that is how he treated Gentiles and tax collectors. Jesus is saying that if someone sins, no effort must be spared to bring about the reform of the sinner and keep him in the community. Jesus further says when the community or even two or three members of the community prays about this issue, their decision will be affirmed in heaven.

IS THERE A CAUSE FOR GRATITUDE THIS WEEK?

IS THERE A PRAYER REQUEST YOU HAVE?

CLOSING PRAYER - The Lord’s Prayer

Bible Sharing Room 5 and Zoom
Starting Sept 6 from 6:30 – 7:30 pm EST Weekly on Wednesday
notes

Description: Blessed Sacrament is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Blessed Sacrament's Zoom Meeting
Time: Sept 6, 2023 06:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Weekly: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZlkd-qgrj8qG9Rt4LoXWaku9w9Mo6AzLDCs/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGupzspEtSRsBiHRpwAHYigb_zziClfjfpviEvJDBhkYwjjb_UbH7opMcL8

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86903804010?pwd=MGJydS9qSW9LSzNGblZSM2xZcWpGZz09>

Meeting ID: 869 0380 4010

Passcode: 086586

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