

Readings

Ez 33:7-9

Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Rom 13:8-10

Mt 18:15-20

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Someday, when each one of us arrives at those pearly gates, it does not seem reasonable to expect the Lord to be there asking us: How many degrees do you have? Or how many trophies did you win? Or how much money did you make? Jesus' life and teaching more than suggest we will be asked one critical question: How did you treat one another?

The gospel today recognizes that it is easy to love our friends and those who love us back, but what about those people who sin against us, betray us, cause us hardship in some way?

Once again, Jesus is showing us the way to help us mend our broken relationships and find peace in the process. First, when these things happen, don't stew over them or brood to a boil. Try to communicate the situation to the other in a conversation where both parties listen. Often, bringing a situation to light can reveal how trivial it may be or how hurtful it was to one or more parties.

If this does not yield fruit, it may be helpful to engage a trusted confidential wisdom figure who can help mediate and offer some further understanding and feedback. Sometimes we don't always see in ourselves what others can see in us.

Further, the gospel teaches, if healing and reconciliation still eludes you, take it to the Church. The Church and our faith offer time-tested spiritual practices to help facilitate grace and the

healing process. Try praying for the person and the situation. It is hard to hate someone you pray for. Try the centering practice of a rosary... time with the blessed sacrament... reflection (not obsession) with some helpful scripture can all provide the spirit and inner peace to navigate the situation with serenity.

May we all lean on our faith to find the strength in times of trial to let go and let God.

Finally, if all that fails, then Jesus says to treat them as if they were a gentile or tax collector. Yes, now I understand, now I can treat the person as the irredeemable, hopeless person that I thought they were. “You’re dead to me.”

No, that is not what Jesus was saying. How did Jesus treat gentiles and tax collectors? He loved them too. He never set limits on his willingness to forgive. He put no limits on the bandwidth of his love.

Contrary to what you might think, we Augustinians do not always see eye to eye, and can have our fair share of hurts and wounds inflicted on each other.

The *Rule* of Saint Augustine is a set of precepts given to us by our Holy Father Augustine to help us live communal life in harmony and accountability with one another. Chapter Four calls us to Fraternal Correction: “Do not charge yourselves with ill will when you bring an offense to light. Indeed, yours will be the greater blame if you allow your brother to be lost through your silence when you are able to bring about their correction by your disclosure. If your brother, for example, were suffering from a bodily wound that he wanted to hide for fear of undergoing treatment, would it not be cruel of you to remain silent, and a mercy on your part to make this known? How much greater then is your obligation to make his condition known lest he continue to suffer a more deadly wound of the soul...”

In this beautiful but broken world, we are called to work together toward reconciliation. Betrayal is something that people do to us; bitterness is something we do to ourselves. Indeed, holding on to a past hurt or grudge can do great damage to ourselves. It can be like holding on to a burning rock; it only burns our own hand.

Everyone here today has a broken heart. All of us have known the pain of a broken relationship, we have been hurt and we have caused hurt. Still, Jesus welcomes us around this table to remind us that through his cross he has paid for our sins, faults and mistakes. He offers us his love, mercy and forgiveness without cost and calls us to share those gifts with others. May you know and feel the love with out limitation that Jesus offers you and no longer allow your past to hurt your present.

Be inspired by this gospel. Be filled with the body of Christ and the spirit that sends us forth back into a challenging world with relationships in need of mending and a call treat others the way Jesus did and does! Let us pray for healing between adversaries, counties, enemies and within families.

Let's get ready now for whenever that day comes, when the Lord asks: How did you treat others? May we be able to say today and every day; with humility and faith: I tried to love them the way you love us.