



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
6th September, 2026**

Theme: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Gathering Prayer

Facilitator: O God, by whom we are redeemed and receive adoption, look graciously upon your beloved sons and daughters, that those who believe in Christ may receive true freedom and an everlasting inheritance. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Matthew 18:15-20

¹⁵ "If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. ¹⁶ If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain the charge. ¹⁷ But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community; treat him like a pagan or a tax collector.

¹⁸ I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them."

Gospel Focus

Jesus does not see his followers as living isolated lives, each following him on their own, but sharing that pursuit together in community. In fact, this community is itself a vessel for God's grace. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I." However, Jesus also recognizes the challenges of community life, giving the Twelve criteria by which to handle disputes among believers. Even in the case of conflict, relationship is not to be ignored-initially, conflicts should be worked out between conflicting parties directly, without drawing others into gossip. Conflict that persists damages the entire community, however, not just those involved, and at that point it must be mediated in the context of the local community, still with the intent of restoring right relationship. However, sometimes drawing a boundary (here, excommunication) is necessary for the sake of all, with that hope that dissent is worked out in distance.

Decision-making on behalf of the community (binding and loosing) is here extended to all of the Twelve. It is an authority that is rooted in Peter's leadership, but is exercised together as apostles in common.

Gospel Reflection

Some years ago a religious sister overheard a hurtful comment made about her by one of her coworkers. For weeks, her community members heard her reply the remark again and again, and her hurt feelings grew exponentially. Finally, they urged her to go speak with the person who had offended her to try to smooth things out. After a pause, she confessed, "I think I'd rather have my grievances!"

In today's gospel, Jesus provides advice to his disciples on how to move step-by-step toward reconciling grievances within the Christian community. This is not a recipe that can be applied to all situations, but it gives some specific advice on how to resolve differences when one is hurt by another member of the community.

The first step, says Jesus, is for the one who has suffered the hurt to confront the person who has inflicted it. This is not as easy as it may sound. But there will never be peace as long as the one harmed allows the hurt to fester and grow by holding on to it and recounting it to others. If, however, the one hurt musters the courage to speak to the other, and if the other has the courage to listen honestly and openly; reconciliation becomes a possibility.

What Jesus does not outline here is that for true reconciliation to occur, the one who is hurt must be willing to offer forgiveness, and the perpetrator of the harm must be willing to acknowledge it truthfully, amend the behavior, and make restitution, if possible. Then there is the possibility of a new future of peaceful interrelation between the two.

What if one-on-one confrontation does not work? Then, Jesus says, take one or two others along with you. This is not so that you can gang up on the one who hurt you; rather an impartial mediator or two can help establish the truth and can help bring the parties to an agreement.

Jesus anticipates that the disciples will press him further: But what if that doesn't work either? Then, Jesus says, involve the whole community, since any rupture in relationships within the Christian community affects all the members. If this strategy fails as well, Jesus then says to treat the offender as "a Gentile or a tax collector."

At first this may seem to mean that the offender should be excluded from the community. But when we look at the way Jesus befriended and ate with such people (see Matt 8:5-13; 9:9-13; 11:19; 15:21-28), it may be that Jesus is asking us to be willing to sit and break bread together, even when we have irreconcilable differences. It is important to note that the gospel text does not indicate the nature of the offense. The strategy outlined in today's gospel would not work for every kind of offense.

Finally, Jesus urges the community to pray together for reconciliation. Already the animosity melts away when parties to a grievance can agree to pray for resolution. When they can genuinely pray for good of the other, their prayer is already granted.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Ezekiel 33:7-9

⁷ The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows: "Son of man, I have appointed you as sentry for the House of Israel. When you hear a word from my mouth, warn them in my name. ⁸ If I say to a wicked man: "Wicked wretch, you are to die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked man to renounce his ways, then he shall die for his sin, but I will hold you responsible for his death. ⁹ If, however, you do warn a wicked man to

renounce his ways and repent, and he does not repent, then he shall die for this sin, but you yourself will have saved your life.

Responsorial Reading —Psalms 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

R: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us cry out with joy to Yahweh; acclaim the rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; acclaim him with music. **(R)**

Come, let us bow low and do reverence; kneel before Yahweh who made us. For he is our God, and we are the people of his sheepfold, the flock of his hands. **(R)**

Do not harden your hearts at Meribah, as at the time of Massah in the desert, when your ancestors challenged me, put me to the test, and saw what I could do.” **(R)**

Second Reading — Romans 13: 8-10

⁸ Avoid getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love. ⁹ If you love your fellow men you have carried out your obligations. All the commandments: *You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet*, and so on, are summed up in this single command: *You must love your neighbor as yourself*. ¹⁰ Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbor; that is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

553. Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Mt 16:19) The "power of the keys" designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirmed this mandate after his Resurrection: "Feed my sheep." (Jn 21:15-17; Cf. 10:11) The power to "bind and loose" connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgements, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church. Jesus entrusted this authority to the Church through the ministry of the apostles (Cf. Mt 18:18) and in particular through the ministry of Peter, the only one to whom he specifically entrusted the keys of the kingdom.

1088. "To accomplish so great a work" - the dispensation or communication of his work of salvation - "Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,' but especially in the Eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments so that when anybody baptizes, it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. Lastly, he is present when the Church prays and sings, for he has promised 'where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.'" (SC 7; Mt 18:20)

1444. In imparting to his apostles his own power to forgive sins the Lord also gives them the authority to reconcile sinners with the Church. This ecclesial dimension of their task is expressed most notably in Christ's solemn words to Simon Peter: "I will give you

the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."(Mt 16:19; cf. Mt 18:18; 28:16-20) "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of the apostles united to its head."(LG 22 # 2)

2472. The duty of Christians to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as witnesses of the Gospel and of the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds. Witness is an act of justice that establishes the truth or makes it known.(Cf. Mt 18:16)

All Christians by the example of their lives and the witness of their word, wherever they live, have an obligation to manifest the new man which they have put on in Baptism and to reveal the power of the Holy Spirit by whom they were strengthened at Confirmation.

Sharing and Discussion

1. In Matthew 18, the ultimate goal of addressing sin is always healing and restoration, never punishment. When you personally approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation, do you instinctively feel like you are walking into a place of judgment, or a place of profound healing? What helps you move past fear or shame to experience Confession as a true grace of renewal?"
2. When Jesus speaks of bringing in witnesses or the wider community (verses 16-17), He invites us into a shared journey of spiritual growth. What are some life-giving, encouraging ways our small group can cheer each other on toward holiness, intentionally choosing grace rather than criticism?
3. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." In what ways have you tangibly felt the presence of Jesus showing up when your small group or community gathers, especially during challenging moments?
4. Verse 20 grounds community life in the very presence of Christ. How can we, as a small group, intentionally invite Jesus into the room—not just at the start with an opening prayer, but throughout our entire time together?

Closing Prayer

Facilitator: Loving God, hear these prayers, for we trust that when we come together in your name, you listen with a merciful heart. Hear these prayers, as well as the ones we hold in the silence of our hearts, and answer them according to your will. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

Looking to deepen your faith and connect with fellow parishioners? Join us for our "Living the Gospel" Bible study and sharing session at the parish. Together, we will reflect on God's Word, grow in faith, and journey together in fellowship.

Every Saturday

Time: 9.30 – 11.00 am

Venue: Level 3, Rm 03-06

All are welcome! For more information, please contact;

Mary Chua - 96965049 (marybay2468@gmail.com)

George Chee – 97399216 (georgejc@gmail.com)

Reflection material available on Parish Website under – (Weekly Bible Sharing - Living the Gospel)

References for the Living the Gospel Reflection:

- 1) Gospel notes taken from the Navarre Bible.
- 2) Gospel reflection and Living Liturgy are taken from "Living Liturgy for Sunday and Solemnities" by Order of St Benedict. Published by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. Reprinted with permission.
- 3) CCC references are taken from Catechism of the Catholic Church.