



September 6, 2020
Twenty-Third Sunday
in Ordinary Time

GOSPEL MATTHEW 18:15-20

Jesus said to his disciples: “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. 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.’ 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.

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.

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



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Taken from *Opening the Word, Leader Guide, Year A*, p. 420.

One of the great spiritual truths is that forgiveness is as much for ourselves as it is for the other person. If we do not forgive, we hold that person in bondage to their sin. And we hold ourselves in bondage both to the sin and the sinner as well. It isn't always easy to forgive. Sometimes we don't even want to forgive. We begin the process, and it is a process, by asking for the desire to desire to forgive. Eventually, as that desire takes root, we learn to let go of our mistaken notions about forgiveness and come to understand what forgiveness really consists of.

Forgiveness doesn't mean that the sin doesn't matter. It doesn't mean that we forget something bad happened to us. It doesn't mean everything is "all better," and it certainly doesn't mean that restitution and justice aren't needed.

True forgiveness is a free will action, prompted by God, that frees us from bondage. It's not an emotion; it's an act of the will. It's making a decision to let go of the chains that bind us, and then moving forward. Remember that the Lord tells us that everything can be worked to the good for those who believe, including the greatest of sins committed against us. One of the keys to having that happen is our cooperation with God's requirement to forgive. But first, we have to be willing to take that first step of the will.

- Children are able to forgive freely and spontaneously. Why is forgiveness so hard for adults?
- We all have someone we need to forgive. Who is that for you? What is the offense? Share if you'd like.
- Consider those in your life who need forgiveness. What would the first concrete step be in this process for you?
- Christ came for forgiveness. His mission was to forgive us and reconcile us to the Father. Ask Jesus for the same grace of mercy and forgiveness; to be able to see the offense from his Sacred Heart, and to take the first step, the next concrete step, to reconciliation.
- Practical Resolution to live out this week: _____