

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time -Homily by Fr.Robin CRM

Readings: Ezekiel 33:7–9; Romans 13:8–10; Matthew 18:15–20

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today's readings speak about something that is both beautiful and difficult: our responsibility for one another.

We live in a world where it is very easy to say, "*That is not my problem.*"

Someone is struggling—we walk away.

Someone is making a wrong decision—we remain silent.

Someone has offended us—we speak about them to everyone except the person concerned.

But the Word of God gives us a different way.

In the first reading, God says to the prophet Ezekiel:

"I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel."

A watchman has a responsibility. He cannot see danger coming and simply remain silent. If he warns the people, he has done his duty.

This does not mean that we should become people who constantly correct others or interfere in everyone's lives. Rather, it means that love sometimes requires us to speak the truth.

Jesus says in today's Gospel:

"If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone."

Notice something very important: Jesus does not say, "*Go and tell everybody.*"

He says, "Go and speak to him privately."

How often we do the opposite!

Someone hurts us, and instead of speaking to that person, we tell our friends.

We tell our family. We send a message. We complain to somebody else. By the time the person hears about it, the small problem has become a large wound.

Jesus teaches us another way:

Go directly. Speak privately. Speak honestly. Speak with charity.

There is a beautiful practical lesson here.

Suppose a husband is hurt by something his wife has said. Instead of carrying resentment for three weeks, or telling his friends, he can simply say:

"What you said yesterday hurt me. Perhaps you did not mean it, but I wanted to tell you how I felt."

Or a wife may say:

"I feel that we have become distant. Can we talk?"

Or two parishioners may disagree about something in the parish. Instead of forming two groups and talking about one another, they can sit down and say:

"Let us try to understand each other."

That is Christian maturity.

St Paul gives us the key in the second reading:

"Owe no one anything, except to love one another."

What a beautiful sentence!

We may owe money to someone. We may owe gratitude. We may owe an apology. But above everything else, we owe love.

Therefore, even when we correct someone, we must ask ourselves:

"Am I correcting this person because I love them, or because I want to prove that I am right?"

There is a great difference.

A parent correcting a child can say:

"I am telling you this because I love you and I don't want you to hurt yourself."

The same words, spoken with anger, humiliation and contempt, can wound a child for years.

The same is true in the Church.

We should never use truth as a weapon.

Truth without charity can destroy; charity without truth can mislead. But truth spoken with charity can save.

3. Sometimes the greatest Christian act is forgiveness

Perhaps someone here today is carrying a wound.

Someone said something years ago.

Someone betrayed your trust.

Someone in the family hurt you.

Perhaps even someone in the Church disappointed you.

And every time you see that person, the wound comes back.

Jesus does not ask us to pretend that nothing happened.

But He asks us not to allow the wound to become hatred.

Sometimes forgiveness begins with a very small prayer:

“Lord, I am not yet able to forgive this person completely. But I want to want to forgive. Give me the grace.”

That prayer can be the beginning of healing.

Forgiveness does not mean approving what happened. It means refusing to allow another person's sin to control the rest of our life.

Then Jesus gives us one of the most consoling promises in the Gospel:

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

What does Jesus mean?

He reminds us that Christianity is not a solitary journey.

We need one another.

A family praying together—even for five minutes—becomes a place where Christ is present.

Two friends who sit together and pray after an argument invite Christ into their relationship.

A parish community that chooses reconciliation rather than gossip becomes a living testimony to the Gospel.

Imagine if, in every family, every parish group and every Christian community, we followed three simple rules:

Speak to the person, not about the person.

Pray for the person, not against the person.

Seek reconciliation, not victory.

How different our families would be!
How different our parish would be!
How different our world would be!

The first reading calls Ezekiel a watchman.

In some way, every Christian is a watchman.

A mother is a watchman for her children.
A father is a watchman for his family.
Friends are watchmen for one another.
Priests are watchmen for their people.
And every Christian has a responsibility for the spiritual welfare of others.

But the watchman does not shout insults from the tower.

He watches.

He cares.

He warns.

He protects.

And he does it because he loves.

My dear brothers and sisters,

Today the Lord perhaps asks each of us one simple question:

“Is there someone I need to speak to?”

Perhaps there is someone we need to approach with humility.

“Is there someone I need to forgive?”

Perhaps there is someone whose name we need to place before God.

“Is there someone I have been talking about instead of talking to?”

Perhaps today we need to stop the gossip.

And finally:

“Is there someone who needs me to be a watchman—a person who will lovingly help them find their way back to God?”

Let us remember the words of St Paul:

“The one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

May the Lord give us the courage to speak the truth,
the humility to accept correction,
the wisdom to correct with gentleness,
and above all, a heart that knows how to love and forgive.

And may Jesus' promise become real in our families and in our parish:

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

Amen.