

23<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Sunday  
September 6, 2020  
“Giving and Taking Correction”

Ez 33:7-9

Rom 13:8-10

Mt 18:15-20

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Giving and taking correction is never an easy thing. Giving correction presumes that we see another’s behavior to be harmful to themselves or to others. Taking correction means that we must admit that we are wrong about something. It means being humble and honest enough to admit our shortcomings. It requires changing our thinking or behavior that is, often, long-standing, habitual, and even ingrained!

Correction is different than nagging. Nagging can be upsetting and can lead to verbal disagreements and fighting, especially in marriage. Moreover, it is important that the correction we give is not based upon our selfishness, or our desire to control others in inappropriate ways.

Giving and taking correction can be a very complex thing. Fortunately, the scriptures for today have much to teach us about this important subject.

The prophet Ezekiel was sent by God to correct the Chosen People of Jerusalem and Judea. In today’s reading, he is already in Babylon with the first and largest group of exiles. The Babylonians had left behind a considerable number of Judeans to keep things going in Jerusalem and its environs. However, those who remained there did not amend their ways with God. They also plotted insurrection and rebellion against the rule of Babylon.

Consequently, God directed Ezekiel to speak out and correct His Chosen People. They needed to amend their lives and truly serve God alone! Moreover, Ezekiel would be held accountable if he did not warn them again. So warn them, he did! And when they failed to heed his words and change – they were punished with the total destruction of Jerusalem and final deportation into exile!

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gives us sound advice. If we must correct someone, then it should be done in private. Embarrassing them in the presence of others does not help our case or our future relationship with them.

If this fails, then we are to get 2 or 3 others and make another attempt. Hopefully, this will have a good effect if we do so kindly and are open to discussing the matter with them.

If that approach fails, we should enlist the Christian community to confront the person – if it is an issue that affects the community. And if that fails, we must separate them from the community lest it becomes harmed. Formally, this is what excommunication entails. Hopefully, this separation will influence the recalcitrant person to reconsider and make the necessary changes for the better!

What is important is always to give or take necessary correction in love. It is also important to pray before giving correction – and to reflect, prayerfully, after we have received correction ourselves.

St. Paul urges us “to owe nothing to anyone except to love one another”. All the commandments regarding others are summed up in the words: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”! Love never does evil or harm to anyone. Thus, we should reflect carefully and prayerfully whenever we think we should correct anyone else – be it spouse, children, parent, subordinates, superiors, friend, or even a potential enemy!

Consequently, Brothers and Sisters, we should ask ourselves some questions. Do we correct out of love? Do we receive correction with an open and loving heart and spirit? When others correct us, do we reflect upon how the change can make us a better person? And in giving correction, do we ask for God’s hand directing us in what we should say, how we should say it, besides when and where the proper time and place are?

Above all, are we always kind and patient with others who seem trapped in a particular behavior or lifestyle? Do we pray for them and hope for them to make the godly decision for improvement?

O Lord, our God, we are your wounded and sinful children. Help us with your love and grace to be better in everything we do. May our minds and hearts be changed into the likeness of Jesus, your Son and our brother. And, like him, may we, one day, see you face to face in your kingdom of eternal love and life!

Amen.

September 6, 2020

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