

23rd Ordinary Sunday
September 10, 2023
“Correcting Others”

Ez 33:7-9
Rom 13:8-10
Mt 18:15-20

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Whether we know it or not, we all have an obligation to make the world a better place. We must do all that we can to make ourselves better persons – And we must also help others to become the best that they can be.

One of the tasks we all face is that of correcting others. Often, this is not easy – especially since we are inherently flawed ourselves. Parents must correct their children – Sometimes the children must correct their parents! Spouses must correct each other – By doing so, they grow closer together on their life-long vocation.

Things become more difficult when we must correct those in power. Even priests and bishops must be corrected when it is clear that they are doing something wrong!

Unfortunately, terrible things have happened – and they will continue to happen – because of the evil in the world. Wealth and power have the characteristic of tempting people to do wrong. And whenever we “look the other way” – or say “It’s none of my business” – we are failing in our universal charge to make the world a better place!

A statement, falsely attributed to Edmund Burke, is: “All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing!” True Christians and authentic disciples can never stand by and do nothing when family members, friends, associates, and leaders are on the wrong moral path. And the scriptures for today have strong words to undergird what I have said thus far.

In Babylon, God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel was to become a “watchman” for Israel. He was to correct the Chosen People who were on the wrong path. In fact, his personal salvation depended upon his correcting them!

We know from history that most disregarded what Ezekiel warned against. They had closed their minds and hardened their hearts! However, the few who listened became the Remnant – And it was from these, that Jesus would come someday!

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us how important it is to correct others. First, we are to do so privately. If we are unsuccessful, we are to get others to speak as well. If it is truly a serious thing – and no change is forthcoming – then we must re-start our mutual association or relationship. We treat the other person as someone who is not a Christian – We, patiently, try to open their mind and heart with prayer, kindness, and our own, everyday, good example and behavior!

Actually, prayer and kindness should be a part of any correction we attempt with others. Prayer will open our own minds and hearts. The Holy Spirit will enable us to see the flaws in ourselves. That same Divine Spirit will provide the occasion and the words best-suited to bring about change in the other person.

One of the pitfalls in correcting anyone is anger or upset. We should never correct someone when we are personally angry. When we do so, all they hear is our anger – Then, they usually become closed, defensive, and angry themselves!

Instead, we must take to heart the words of St. Paul to the Romans. “We should owe nothing to anyone, except to love them!” We must love them as we love ourselves. We must treat them as we would hope to be treated ourselves. In all things we should treat them as God treats us: with respect, with kindness, with courtesy, with patience, and with forgiveness!

Brothers and Sisters, correcting others can be a daunting endeavor. Nevertheless, it can and must be done to counteract evil and to make the world a better place. Jesus came to correct and redeem a fallen world. He was crucified because some refused to change. But Jesus rose from his death – He continues to be with us with God’s love.

So, let us pray that we learn to listen to the Holy Spirit’s correction in our hearts and lives.

May that same Spirit guide us as we try to live, fully, the Gospel way of Jesus!

Amen.

September 10, 2023

Msgr. Russell G. Terra