

Fr Ryan Homily 9-10-23

Read: Ezekiel 33:7-9; Psalm 95; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20

There's a famous Christian, he is passed away now, but his name was Chuck Colson and Chuck Colson did a lot for prison ministry and evangelization throughout the country, throughout the world. He was originally famous because he was part of the Watergate scandal, he got sent to prison for that. But after he got out he gave his life to Christ, had a very deep conversion and he would go to places around the country and give talks to large groups of people and he would ask a basic question of them. What is Christianity? And he would ask them to tell him what do you think Christianity is and people would say it's a religion. He'd say yup it is. Some people would say it's a relationship, that's also true. It's all of these things but Chuck Colson said in all of the answers people ever gave him there was always an answer that he thought people had missed. He said Christianity can be summed up by one word; Christianity is a world view. Christianity is not just looking at the world like the rest of the world and we believe a few extra things, but Christianity is not changing the way we see some things it changes the way we see everything. It changes our view of the world, our world view and if you remember last Sunday St Paul told us do not be conformed to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. It's basically asking are we looking at the world like the rest of the world or are we looking at the world as Christians. And why is that question so important to us? Why? Because vision and how we see, how we look at things, the world, people determines our destination, our goal. What we actually do. If I look at the world like the world I end up like the world but if I look at the world like Jesus I wind up like Christ. My vision determines destination. In the gospel today Jesus is trying to shape our world view and shape how we see a person who has sinned against you and shape how we would respond when that happens. When someone has done something wrong that's the big question. How does a Christian respond to that? Or to ask it like this when someone has sinned against you how do you look at them? I think the first natural inclination is to be angry, to be angry at them. And then maybe to say we're done. We're done with that person, and we look away. We don't want to see that person anymore because the hurt and the person are the same in our hearts. So we disqualify them, dismiss them, their done, I don't respond to them anymore, I cut you out of my life. Or even worse we dogpile, we get other people

to pounce on them as well and we kinda air what they did to shame them, to embarrass them. Maybe we give some drive by criticism before we leave. But in every one of those very natural inclinations it involves a temptation to look at the person as a non-person. Every one of those responses when we are sinned against is a temptation to look at the other, to start looking at them as a non-person – even just looking away. So Jesus says if your brother sins against you – so what He means there is brother, brother means brother, He means someone who's close to you. Not necessarily only blood relation but someone you have allowed in. Someone that you trust, you're open with, you share deep things with, someone you have lent your heart to, that person. When your brother sins against you here's what you do you go to that person. Jesus is implying what we heard in the first reading that there is a responsibility that comes along with having that type of a relationship. Because the temptation is you crossed me, you betrayed me, you did this thing, you are done, you are out. And again sometimes we're tempted to go farther. Not only are we done with that person but we want other people to be done with that person and so we spread it out there, we dogpile, we air it out. Not only am I done with you I want everybody to be done with you. Or we do the drive by correction thing – here's everything you've ever done wrong and why you're an awful person and I'm leaving. But what does Jesus say? All of those things treat the other as a non-person. Jesus says when your brother sins against you – again the relationship implies a responsibility – you have to do this. You go to your brother in private. The first step is to keep it personal and private. You're not doing it to strike back or to shame or wound the other person like they wounded you. It's personal because you need to fight to still see them as a person and it's private because maybe, just maybe, you were hurt through a misunderstanding and not from what that person actually said or did. And so you're giving them a chance to clear it up. But even if it was a sin against you, you give them an opportunity to apologize. And then what Jesus says next is just as important that if the person doesn't listen to you, if they don't apologize, bring two or three others with you. Other people in the family of God with you to verify the testimony. So He's saying be persistent in this. Cause what happens? Like we offer maybe a chance at reconciliation, and they don't take it and so we give up on them. Right we say I tried because I'm a big person but now I'm done. Jesus is saying don't give up, go back, keep fighting for the person. Think about it what other relationship do we have in this world where we might need to bring in a

third party to save the relationship? It's a relationship where people have been hurt by each other. What's one relationship that's in this world where we might bring a third party in because we're saying no this relationship is worth fighting for, it's worth saving – it's marriage. How often are there husbands and wives who are like we are at odds, we have hurt each other too often, we've grown apart too much but we're not gonna give up on this, we're gonna bring in somebody to help us because not so that I can win, but because this relationship is worth fighting for. And too often in marriages and friendships and co-worker relationships, the other becomes a non-person because in my mind they're just a monster. Right in my mind that's the one who hurt me. In my mind they're beyond forgiveness. And Jesus is saying no it's personal, it's stays private but then if that doesn't work be personal and persistent. Don't give up on this relationship. This is what Jesus is saying about the church be personal and persistent. If you need to bring in somebody else to mediate this, to heal this, it's important. And Jesus says if that doesn't work bring it to the church. And I think this is being personal and patient. How many times do you keep coming back to someone and saying okay this is the wound, the hurt, the pain that you have caused but I'm not going to make you a non-person, I'm not simply going to dismiss it because it's important you know how you've hurt me. I'm here to love, that's the thing. How do Christians look at the person who has hurt us? Well first we do keep looking at the person. How does a Christian fight for the person who has hurt us? And that's the key, as Christians we do keep fighting for them. I don't know if we ever fight against them. As Christians we're always fighting to see the person and always fighting for the person. Jesus says if they listen to you you've won over your brother. That's what we fight for, we fight to win the person right? How do we win? We win if we bring them back. Not by winning an argument or a debate over them. That's one of the reasons why I think those who work in the prolife world are not just those who fight to stop the evil of abortion, but they are the one's fighting for the parents who have either been tempted to have an abortion or have had an abortion. They're fighting for them. The goal is not to defeat them, the goal is to win them over, to help someone see and repent. Those who fight for prolife are not just the one's who want to fight to end the evil of abortion, they're also the one's who are fighting for the ones who work in the abortion industry. But to do that, to fight like that, to see like a Christian, to fight like a Christian, that takes courage, and it takes time. It's not the drive by correction thing where I throw out

my criticism, I throw out my correction, but I'm still done with you. And I think to do that a lot of times it takes more love than we have. Fighting like a Christian I think takes more love than most of us have because that kind of fighting hurts you. I think sometimes when we offer correction to someone and fighting for them hurts them more than it hurts us than I think we're doing it wrong. If I'm going to offer correction to someone because it's my role or the relationship I have with them and it hurts them more than it hurts me, then I think I'm doing something wrong. And that's one of the reasons why people don't speak up because it's gonna hurt me to do this. Another reason is we might think who am I? I'm nowhere near perfect myself. I might not speak up because doesn't Jesus even say take the beam out of your own eye before you start looking at the splinter in somebody else's? How do I say something when I know how broken I am? And I really like what St Thomas Aquinas has to say on this point, he says maybe it's been presented to you that this brother or sister of yours has this sin or woundedness, they're broken, but you realize you are guilty of the same thing. How could you possibly correct them? Thomas Aquinas says this, but if we find that we are guilty of the same sin we must not rebuke our brother. We must not rebuke our sister but instead we must groan with them and invite them to repent with us. If we realize they're broken in the same way that I'm broken. That often happens right because we see the brokenness or sin in another person that we know is in us, when that happens, when we're guilty in the same way, I don't rebuke them I groan with them and invite them to repent with me. I think as difficult as this call of Jesus is, that either our role or our relationship to the person places on us this responsibility. So lastly it's important to know where Jesus ends here because where He ends is it doesn't work. Where it ends is yeah you went there and you fought to see the other as a person, you fought for the person, and even after going through all of these steps, even after going to them personally and privately and then going back persistently and patiently in the end it doesn't work. After all that it fails. And we have to realize that's the risk, that you could lose a brother, you could lose a sister, you could lose a friend over this. But sometimes that is gonna be the greatest gift you could give that person cause nobody else was willing to be honest with them and being honest is risky. But if you love that person genuinely, if you want what is best for them, if you want what's best for their soul, then you have to be honest with them. If you love the person at some point you need to just point out to them where they are standing.

That they're standing outside. They are standing outside of the church, and you didn't put them there you just pointed it out where they were. And that's what Jesus is saying today. That even after all that they're not listening to you then treat them as a Gentile or a tax collector. What does that mean? That means not someone you hate because Jesus loved Gentiles, He loved tax collectors, but Gentiles and tax collectors were people standing outside. Sometimes one of the ways we fight for people is by pointing out to them where they are standing. So how does a Christian look? Always even in the midst of evil I look at the person. How do we fight as Christians always even when there is evil that needs to be stopped? Our fight is always for the person. The fight is always to see the person. The fight is always not to win the argument but it's always win the person.

Amen