

SUNDAY 23 OT. YEAR A

The common theme in today's readings is that being members of the church we belong to a community of brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are therefore in like keepers of our brothers and sisters. Caring for them with love and affection, or at least we should be.

We are all important to each other in our faith community, a community held together by Jesus commandment of love.

Perhaps the most difficult obligations of watchful love are fraternal correction and generosity of forgiveness.

The first reading from Ezekiel comes from a period around 600 years B.C. when Ezekiel and the nobles

and senior citizens of the country were deported into captivity in Babylon.

Ezekiel is giving a warning from God of approaching dangers; all prophets have the God given role of watchmen and have grave responsibilities for their people's salvation.

In the second reading Paul complements the theme today by reminding the Romans, and us, that the whole Law of Moses and the Prophets has been rolled up by Jesus into one commandment. "Love your neighbor as yourself." And going further to say that all the commandments are summed up in this single commandment.

In the gospel Jesus instructs his disciples about relationships among members of the church, basically telling them to try to resolve difficulties and disagreements amicably without the need to let them fester.

These problems occur mostly within our families and amongst our friends and acquaintances, if someone wrongs us, either by a sin of commission or omission, Jesus today gives us a recipe of how to mend these broken relationships without going to extremes.

The worst thing we can do when a wrong is done to us is to brood about it. Brooding can poison our whole mind and life, and sometimes it gets to the stage where we think of nothing else but our sense of personal injury.

The unfortunate result sometimes is that we become estranged from our loved ones.

If a reconciliation is not possible, and often it isn't It's important not to lose sight of the fact that the real harm comes to ourselves when we continue to harbor feelings of hurt, resentment, anger or even hatred.

These feelings are destructive and can eat away at us causing great harm to us.

For our own sake it's important that we let them go and forgive, even if we don't communicate this to the other party. We just need to let go, within our hearts say "I forgive so & so" and get this destructive element out of our lives.

I'm reminded of a story I read once about an American Indian grandfather talking to his grandson about such a happening. He had been gravely hurt and said that he felt he had 2 wolves inside him as he was trying to sort this out. One an aggressive and angry one the other a merciful and forgiving one. Which one will win asked the lad, and he replied it will be the one I feed.

The question being which wolf would we feed in similar circumstances?

The basic message today is one of love and the good we can do together as a committed group of Jesus disciples.

Jesus says “where two or three are gathered in my name, I shall be there with them” When any group of us gather to work, pray and act with the Holy Spirit guiding us, we become much more than simply the collective number of people we are. Two becomes more than two, three becomes more than three.

The sum of individual ideas, resources and abilities becomes more because of the synergy that God’s presence provides.

In our faith community acting together in God’s name, we multiply our resources and abilities to do what God calls us to do.

We do gather in Jesus’ name and invoke his presence, and that makes him a part of us and of what we do. We experience this at each Eucharist. We in him and He in us, working with us to help us serve others.