

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish **Bulletin for Teens**

Dealing with conflict and hurt



Sunday the 6th of September 2026, Twenty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you; the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector.

'I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.

I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them. The Gospel of the Lord.



Reflecting on what Jesus had to say

Think about the last time that someone hurt you. Maybe a friend said something behind your back, you got left out of something, or a rumour started about you that wasn't true. What was your first move? For most of us, it's anything other than talking to the person directly. We vent to someone else, we get angry and want to hurt them back, we go quiet and hope someone will notice that something is wrong. Talking to the person feels like the last resort, not the first step.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 18:15-21 exactly what to do when someone wrongs you. This was important advice for the disciples and the early Church as they formed new communities who relied on living, sharing and worshipping together. But what Jesus had to say applies to us today too. He is not only giving us conflict resolution advice. He is showing us what love looks like inside a real community, the community that He was building with His disciples and the one He's still building today, in His Church, with us.

Right before this passage, Jesus tells the story of a shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep to go and find the one who wandered off (Matthew 18:12-14). He makes it very clear that God doesn't want to lose a single one of His people, no matter how small or overlooked they might seem. No matter whether they are lost through their own fault or led astray.

That story is the key to everything that follows. Now Jesus is talking about what to do when someone wrongs you. He is not handing the disciples, and us, a set of rules for winning arguments or getting even. He is teaching us how to go after that lost sheep, how to love someone enough to go looking for them, even when they're the one who hurt you.

Jesus tells us exactly what to do

Jesus tells the disciples, and us, exactly what to do. He lays out a series of steps, each one of which gives the relationship another chance.

Go to them first, privately, one on one. Don't shame them or put them in a difficult situation. Instead go to them directly and talk to them. Have a direct and honest conversation. It takes courage. It's not easy, but it is where Jesus tells us to start.

If that doesn't work, bring in one or two others. The next step isn't to gang up on them, but rather to have witnesses (a practice from Jewish law) who help keep things fair and grounded, who listen to both of your versions of events and help you both find a way forward.

If that still doesn't work, bring it to the community. Bring the issue to the community or to their representatives, those who are able to help you work through a serious, unresolved conflict.

And if the person still won't listen, then treat them the way Jews at Jesus' time treated Gentiles (non Jews) and tax collectors. That is, as someone outside the community, outside the circle. That sounds harsh as though Jesus is telling us, and the disciples, to just give up on them. But remember that Jesus ate dinner with tax collectors and healed Gentiles. Jesus never stopped reaching out to those outside the circle, those despised, those outcast, those who were called sinners, the worst of the worst. So in this context, Jesus isn't telling us to write them off, but rather to leave the door open to them. You don't have to be their best friend but you do need to acknowledge that they hurt you and broke your trust, but that there is hope that some level of relationship can be rebuilt, at some point, and with work.

Jesus then says something strange: whatever the disciples bind or loose on earth will be bound or loosed in heaven (v.18). Jesus is handing His followers real spiritual authority so that the Church can carry out the work of teaching, forgiving and reconciling in His name. We see this in action in the Sacrament of Reconciliation where when a priest absolves you in confession, he is acting with the authority that traces all the way back to this moment, when Jesus entrusted this power to His Church.

Finally. Jesus adds that wherever even two or three people come together in His name, He is right there with them (v.20). After everything He has said about confrontation and authority, He reminds us that He isn't distant from any of it. Jesus is present even in the smallest gathering, even in the hardest conversation and the hardest part of being a family, a community.

Thinking about today

- ♦ Group chats and social media make it easier than ever to talk about someone rather than to them. They can also mean that one moment of a wrong decision or stupid act is memorialised for all time. It can follow you (or them) for life. Don't be part of this picture. Speak to the person rather than about them. Let the moments pass without broadcasting them to the world.
- ♦ We live in a culture that's quick to call people out publicly instead of talking to them privately. Everyone makes mistakes. Speak to them privately, only escalate if you truly have to, and never lose sight of the goal of winning the person back, not wrecking their reputation.
- ♦ Forgiveness with a limit isn't really forgiveness. Forgive without keeping count, and definitely without screenshots and a scoreboard.
- ♦ You're never too small a group to matter. If your Catholic friends are just a small group within your School or community, or your youth group feels tiny compared to everything else going on, remember that Jesus is with you no matter how small your group as long as you are gathered in His name. Call on Him and He will guide and support you.

This reflection is about ordinary everyday conflict over hurt feelings, gossip or misunderstandings. If you are ever in a situation involving abuse or real danger, this isn't what is described here. The right move in that situation is always to bring it to a trusted adult, not to try and handle it alone.