



# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)  
September 10, 2023

## It's None of My Business

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

This statement might sound like we are respecting the independence of others. It is none of our business how they live their lives, how they behave in society, how they worship God. We mind our own business; they mind theirs. After all, are we our brother's or sister's keepers?

Today's readings challenge this attitude. Ezekiel is told that he must proclaim God's will to the Israelites. If he reneges in his calling and someone dies in guilt, Ezekiel will be held responsible for that death. However, if the wicked refuse to hear this message, their death

in guilt will be their own doing, for one must freely accept God's word. In the Gospel, Jesus outlines a way for his disciples to lead sinners back to the community. Both Ezekiel and the disciples have responsibilities to those who are not living faithfully. They both take steps to call them back. In this sense, they act as their brother's or sister's keeper. However, they do not meddle in the other's business. The sinner must freely decide to return. God does not force repentance.

This might be a hard message. Who wants to step up and point out another's error in leaving the Church? However, if we are really concerned, we will do what we can to bring them back. We might not proclaim like the prophet or the disciples did. But the way we live our lives should show them the true value in being a faithful follower of Jesus. †

## Sunday Readings

### Ezekiel 33:7-9

I have appointed you as a sentinel for the house of Israel.

### Romans 13:8-10

The commandments...are summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

### Matthew 18:15-20

[Jesus said,] "If your brother sins [against you], go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother."

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decide to return.  
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## A Word from Pope Francis

When we see a mistake, a fault, a slip, in a brother or sister, usually the first thing we do is to go and recount it to others, to gossip. And gossip closes the heart to the community, closes off the unity of the Church. The great gossip is the devil.

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## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Is your life an example of the values of your faith?
- Pray for those you love who have left the practice of the faith.

# Gentle Confrontation

Paige Byrne Shortal

Nowhere in the Bible is there a suggestion that we will get along without disagreements. In today's Gospel reading from Matthew, we hear Jesus tell us what to do when there is a serious conflict. The process remarkably resembles what the folks in Alcoholics Anonymous call an "intervention."

*"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother."*

Scary, huh? Who wants to confront someone in person, directly and alone? Jesus says it's the first necessary step. The best way to approach is to first remind yourself that you love the other person and then confront him or her without malice or vindictiveness. Try simply stating how you feel; how the person's actions affect you. It's called an "I-Statement." Example: "When you drink too much, I feel afraid and angry."



*"If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you so that every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses."* This is the classic intervention. During this encounter the concern for the other person must be obvious at all times. The goal is to make it clear that the behavior is harming others and can no longer be supported or tolerated. If the problem is such that

special help is needed, it's good to have a plan in place—perhaps the phone number of a counselor, a nearby AA meeting that day, an appointment with a professional.

*"If he refuses to listen to them, tell the Church."* Notice, that going public is the third step, not the first! We involve the community only when the first two steps have failed.

*"And if they refuse to listen even to the Church, treat them as you would a Gentile or tax collector."* Jesus is referring here to those who do not belong. It is his version of tough love. We are not to hate or harm the person, but in order to render them unable to do any further harm to the community, we must ignore them.

With each step we take to help another, we must pray, remembering the promise of Jesus: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." †

## The Younger Son By Henri Nouwen

The younger son's return takes place in the very moment that he reclaims his sonship, even though he has lost all the dignity that belongs to it. In fact, it was the loss of everything that brought him to the bottom line of his identity. He hit the bedrock of his sonship. In retrospect, it seems that the prodigal had to lose everything to come into touch with the ground of his being. When he found himself desiring to be treated as one of the pigs, he realized that he was not a pig but a human being, a son of his father. This realization became the basis for his choice to live instead of to die.

*In My Own Words, page 68*



*Generous God, help us to accept others as we want to be accepted; to love as we want to be loved. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The Redemptorists

## WEEKDAY READINGS

September 11–16

**Monday, Weekday:**  
Col 1:24—2:3 / Lk 6:6–11

**Tuesday, Weekday:**  
Col 2:6–15 / Lk 6:12–19

**Wednesday, St. John Chrysostom:**  
Col 3:1–11 / Lk 6:20–26

**Thursday, Exaltation of the Holy Cross:**  
Nm 21:4b–9 / Phil 2:6–11 / Jn 3:13–17

**Friday, Our Lady of Sorrows:**  
1 Tm 1:1–2, 12–14 / Jn 19:25–27 or Lk 2:33–35

**Saturday, Sts. Cornelius and Cyprian:**  
1 Tm 1:15–17 / Lk 6:43–49