

## Homily 9-10-17

If your brother sins against you go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. There's the key! Between you and him alone, not talking about someone behind their back, possibly harming their reputation. If you think this is an easy teaching from our Lord, then you have never had anyone hurt you. Feelings of betrayal, anger, hurt, resentment can sometimes overwhelm us.

A group of ladies formed a bridge club in a certain neighborhood. There were five members in all. Each Tuesday night they would take turns going to each other's house to play cards for a couple hours. No outsider really understood why there were five members in this bridge club until one night a husband came home and saw his wife sitting all alone. He said, "Dear, it's Tuesday night, aren't you supposed to be at Sally's house playing bridge?" She said, "No, I cannot go tonight. It's my turn to stay home and be talked about". One of the most universal signs of human frailty is the habit of discussing another's faults with everyone except the person in question. Talking behind another's back is as widespread as crabgrass. It is one of the major reasons why the love that should bind people of the kingdom together is so often diluted.

A number of years ago this letter was written to advice columnist Ann Landers. "Dear Ann Landers, I have suddenly become aware that the years are flying by. Time somehow seems more precious. My parents suddenly seem old; my aunts and uncles are sick. I have not seen some of my cousins for several years. I love my family, Ann, but we've grown apart. Then my thoughts turn to the dark side. I remember the feelings I have hurt and I recall my own hurt feeling. I think of my mother and her sister who have not spoken to each other in five years. As a result of that argument my cousin and I have not spoken either. What a waste of precious time. Wouldn't it be terrific if a special day could be set aside to reach out and make amends? We could call it 'Reconciliation Day'. Everyone would vow to write a letter or make a phone call and mend a strained or broken relationship. It could also be the day on which we would all agree to accept the olive branch extended by a former friend. We could go on from here to heal the wounds in our hearts. Here was Ann's response. "This is a great idea. I propose that every year at this time we do just that. That we celebrate 'Reconciliation Day' and pick up the phone or write a letter to bring joy to someone who might be in pain".

I don't believe 'Reconciliation Day' ever got off the ground. But it certainly is a great idea. It's such a great idea that our blessed Lord made a sacrament out of it. Admonishing sinners is one of the spiritual works of mercy; sometimes it's called fraternal correction. But we have to go about it the right way.

I'm going to close with five ideas of how we might go about this in the proper way. And nine times out of 10, when we go about this correctly, situations can be improved. FIRST and foremost -- our Lord is very clear about this in today's gospel, be direct. When we believe that someone is in the wrong we should go directly to that person. We should talk to the person before we talk about the person. Sadly, many people find it easier to talk about people than to people when there is friction and discord. That's wrong and it's most likely sinful. SECOND -- be personal. Don't write nasty letters and send harsh e-mails. And keep such matters off of Facebook and twitter. I cannot tell you how many problems are caused by the misuse of social media in these matters. Impose the 24-hour rule on your communication. In other words, think long and hard about what you are going to say before you actually say it. And if you cannot do it in person, it probably should not be done at all. THIRD-- don't go public with your grievances. That's where the sins of malicious gossip and slander raise their ugly heads. In short, give peace a chance. FOURTH-- don't believe everything you hear. Don't make judgments based on second or third hand information, hearsay. Give people the benefit of the doubt when possible. And FINALLY, but not least, try to keep a sense of humor, even about yourself. It oftentimes goes a long way.

God love you!