

23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – YEAR A – 2020

There is an oriental proverb saying: **“The one who sincerely corrects your faults is your genuine friend; but the one who insincerely praises you is your enemy.”**

Correcting the fault or mistake of others is an unpleasant task to do, but it is our Christian duty since we are following the way of Jesus. We are many parts of the same body of Christ, the Church, if one part does not function well, it affects the whole body. Therefore, as Jesus says in the Gospel: “if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault...” It is our duty to help our brothers and sisters who go astray, to bring them back, just as the good shepherd goes searching for the lost sheep.

God’s words through Prophet Ezekiel from the first reading also challenge us to show our genuine love for our brothers and sisters. It is our responsibility to help others to turn away from sin. God said: “If you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked from his way, I will hold you responsible for his death.” But if you warn the wicked and he doesn’t listen, then he shall die for his guilt, but that is not your fault.

In the history of the Church, some of us might have known the story of Henry VIII who used to be a devout Catholic and the King of England in early 16th century. King Henry VIII married Catherine of Spain. Their only child was Princess Mary Tudor. (You can borrow this movie *The Tudor* from public library to watch and know more about this beautiful story).

Henry decided to divorce Catherine, and so he could marry Anne Boleyn, with hope that he would have a son to succeed him. However, his annulment process was refused by the Catholic Church, and was opposed by Bishop John Fisher, and Sir Thomas More of England. Henry was so angry since he believed that as a king, he had the power to do anything he wanted. So, he led the Church of England in its break with Rome, and became the head of the Anglican Church after splitting from the Roman Catholic Church. As the consequence, both Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas More (who was a close friend and adviser of Henry) were beheaded. What a cost of correcting the fault of others!

Another story is the martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist whose feast we just commemorated last week (August 29). John the Baptist bravely denounced King Herod for taking his brother Phillip’s wife. John rebuked the king’s immoral act by telling him: “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” Because of this, Herod threw him in jail and eventually beheaded him. What a cost of correcting the fault of others!

John didn’t fear death. John didn’t fear Herod even though he was a king. But John feared the Lord; he respected the truth. He lived the truth. John’s death reassures us that: following Christ means to carry his cross and walk with him, to accept persecution, even death, for the truth.

Correcting the fault or mistake of others is an unpleasant task to do. Many of us would rather not correct or remind a loved one or a friend for fear of hurting him or her. But fraternal correction is part of Christian life. It has to be done in constructive way. It has to be done with love. Love is the only reason we do this “unpleasant” task of pointing out the mistake of a brother or a sister.

Are there people who correct you? Are there people who point out what is wrong or what can still be improved? Usually, these are the people we would rather avoid because they make us uncomfortable. But consider yourself lucky if you have people who really care for you. When I was a young child, I was disciplined by my parents if I did something wrong. Now I understand that my parents disciplined me because they loved me. They cared for me.

In contrast, there are so many people who will butter you up. They will say or do anything to make you feel that you are excellent, perfect, wonderful, even though all of these are not true. These are the people who will tell you what you want to hear, not what you need to hear. We should be careful with this kind of people too. I would like to repeat the oriental proverb above: **“The one who sincerely corrects your faults is your genuine friend; but the one who insincerely praises you is your enemy.”**

We are facing many moral issues in the world we live today, such as, abortion, death penalty, war, violence... These moral issues challenge us to respond based on the truth of our consciences and the values of our Catholic faith. We may ask ourselves: how do I give witness to Jesus? How do I stand up for what I believe? Can I stand up for gospel values that I believe or do I simply keep silence for my own safety?

In conclusion, let us be advised by the words of Saint Paul in the second reading today: “We are to owe nothing to anyone except to love one another.” Helping one another to keep the Lord’s commandments: “You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal...” Don’t be afraid to correct our brothers and sisters in a constructive way – not with discrimination and hatred, not with gossip and criticism, but all with genuine and sincere love.

MASS INTENTIONS

(from Sunday, September 6 to Saturday, September 12)

Sunday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Joseph Lee Phan (repose)
Monday	No Mass
Tuesday	No Mass
Wednesday	No Mass
Thursday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Guido Mori-Prange (thanksgiving for health)
Friday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Paul Sloan (RIP – Paul died at the 9/11 bombing)
Saturday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Bill Reed (repose)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- There will be no Mass on from Monday 9/7 to Wednesday 9/9. Fr. Phan is visiting his family in Houston and celebrating a Memorial Mass for his father Joseph Lee Phan.
- Please join with others across the nation for the **40 Days for Life Fall Campaign**—40 days of peaceful prayer and vigil (Sept. 23 – Nov. 1, 2020), with masks and social distancing, on the public sidewalk outside the Planned Parenthood abortion business at 4th & H St. in San Rafael. Further information and participant sign-up calendar are available at <https://40daysforlife.com/local-campaigns/san-rafael/>, or contact Ruth Ann Cawley, phone 415-383-6681, email racawley60@gmail.com.