

Father O'Connor's Homily
6 September 2026
Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time-A

Ezekiel 33: 7-9
Psalm 95: 1-2, 6-7, 8-9
Romans 13: 8-10
Matthew 18: 15-20

There was a church where the pastor and the organist were feuding, and the tension was beginning to spill over into Sunday worship.

The first Sunday, the pastor preached on keeping the Ten Commandments. And the organist followed with the hymn, "Amazing Grace – My Chains Are Gone."

The next week he preached on tithing a portion of their financial blessings. And she countered with, "Jesus Paid It All."

The next week he talked about gossip, and she came back with the hymn, "I Love to Tell the Story."

Then he told the congregation that he was thinking about resigning, and she responded with the hymn, "O Why Not Tonight?"

The next week he announced his resignation by saying, "Jesus led me to this church and now Jesus is leading me from this church." And she immediately broke out full-organ with the hymn, "What A Friend We Have in Jesus."

Is there anyone who is a difficult person in your life? If any of you are saying, "Nobody," I don't believe you. I suspect that for most of us it would not be just one difficult person. It would be a whole list! And you know what? You and I are probably on someone else's list – and more than likely on several persons' lists. But take heart. We likely all are.

In today's Gospel, Jesus acknowledges that even within the Church family there can be frictions between some members. And Jesus gives us a plan of action. He says: "If your brother or sister sins against you, go and tell them their fault between you and them alone. If they listen to you, you have won over your brother or your sister."

When we are hurt, we have the tendency to talk about it with everyone except the person who caused the hurt. Think how many fights, conflicts, deaths, even wars could have been prevented in our world if people would have addressed issues while they were still small and before they got out of

hand. Sadly, violence and shootings have become daily news items, and they are such tragic outcomes.

And notice this important detail: “If your brother or sister sins against you, go and tell them their fault between you and them alone.” “You go to them,” Jesus tells us. But how do we feel about that? “They started it... Let them come to me.” [And how many days, months and years of “brooding and not speaking” can go on, waiting for the other person to make the first move?]

Sometimes the most important starting point is not establishing who is to blame, but opening the door of communication so that hurtful issues can be sorted out and mended.

Some people have a “mud room” in their homes. Jackie and Joe have what they call a “mad room.” In their marriage whenever they have a disagreement they go to their “mad room” together and don’t leave until they have worked out some kind of resolution. They find that talking about it together is far more productive than fighting about who is to blame.

In the popular “Chicken Soup” series, the author was talking to a class of adults and gave them this assignment: “This week go to someone that you love and tell them that you love them.”

The next week one of the men in the class reported on his experience. “Five years ago, my father and I had a big fight. We never really made up. At family gatherings we would be civil to each other, but that was about it. So I needed to go to my father.

“I went to the house, hoping that my mother would answer the door so I could tell her that I love her and be off the hook. But my dad answered the door. So I got up the courage and said, ‘I came here tonight to tell you that I love you and that I am sorry.’

“And I saw a change in my dad’s face. The wrinkles almost disappeared and I saw tears glistening in his eyes. And he said to me, ‘Son, I love you too, but I have always had a hard time saying it. I am so happy that you had the courage to come and say it first.’ And we hugged each other, and things already started to feel better.

“But that is not the end of my story. Two days later my father had a massive heart attack and ended up in the hospital. Now I am so grateful that I was blessed with the grace to go to his house that night and be reconciled with my father, and tell him that I love him.”

And he said to the class: “That’s my message to you. Tell them you love them today. Don’t put it off. Do something now to at least try to open

the door of communication. You may not get the results that you want, but you are truly the bigger person because you took that first step.”

Jesus teaches us some very practical things in today’s Gospel. Not easy things, but practical things. We are all going to experience hurts in life – sometimes by people who do it on purpose, but more often by people who love us and who maybe don’t fully realize what they are doing.

Jesus encourages us to take the first step because communicating with people that we love is far more important than establishing who is to blame. And today presents another graced opportunity.

We sang in the Responsorial Psalm [Psalm 95]: “If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” When is a good time to say, “I love you”? On a day just like today. “If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”