



CELEBRATING AT HOME

23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

A family formed by forgiveness (Matthew 18:15-20)



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Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord is here, present among us.

**We are gathered with the whole Church
in this moment of prayer.**

Preparing to hear the Word

We have been called by God
to be the Church,
**the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God
in this world.**

Lord Jesus,
**you came to reconcile us to one another
and to the Father.**

Lord Jesus,
you heal the wounds of sin and division.

Lord Jesus,
you intercede for us with your Father.

Scripture Reading (*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.'

Reflection - *A family formed by forgiveness*

Chapter 18 of St Matthew's Gospel is often referred to as the Sermon on the Church. It contains the teaching of Jesus about the life of the Christian community.

Today's reading details a procedure for dealing with differences and disputes. It follows the Parable of the Lost Sheep which is concerned with seeking out and bringing back the one who gets lost.

In the same way, resolving disputes is not about being right and punishing an offender, but about conversion and reconciliation.

The three-stage process moves from individual dialogue to a small group trying to sort things out, to the whole community being involved in discernment and decision.

Traditionally, we have understood the words, 'if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a gentile or a tax collector, to mean that the person should be expelled or excommunicated from the community.

However, Jesus was notorious for sharing meals with tax collectors and sinners and he called one of them, Matthew, into his inner circle of disciples. At the end of the Gospel, Jesus instructs the disciples not to reject the pagans but to invite them to become children of God. Excommunication doesn't seem to fit, either, with the sentiments in the Lord's prayer about forgiveness.

The parable of the Lost Sheep immediately before this passage seems to indicate that the church, following Jesus' example, should never give up on any of the sheep, especially the lost ones. It has a responsibility to try to win them back.

The next verse about 'binding and loosing' extends to the community the power of authoritative decision-making given to Peter and the disciple-leaders in the Gospel of two Sundays ago. This decision-making follows community discussion and discernment about what is to be done.

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If members of the community pray and discern together about how to win back the lost one, their prayer will be heard, even if only two pray. Jesus reminds them that whenever members of the community gather in his name he is present with them.

We share a common responsibility for the lives and faith of one another and for our community as a whole. Our presence, example and prayer encourage and confirm the faith and life of Jesus among us.

Prayers of Intercession

God of endless compassion,
fill us with your Spirit that we may bear gently and wisely the responsibility of each other.

Help us to build a just and lasting peace
among all the peoples of the earth.

God of wisdom,
strengthen us with insight to be faithful to your word revealed among us.

Lord's Prayer

Formed by the teaching and example of Jesus, we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

Closing Prayer

Ever-loving God,
with unparalleled love you have saved us from death
and drawn us into the circle of your life.
Fill our hearts with your love,
so that every action of ours may bring health and
healing to others. Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us now and always. Amen.



Journey into the Light

This resource is presented by the Carmelites for use by individuals, families and small groups as a prayerful celebration of the Word of God to help prepare us to celebrate the Eucharist with our worshipping communities. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. We are also conscious of the many people who, for various reasons including sickness and infirmity, cannot physically attend the Eucharist. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family.



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