



# WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



## 23<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE A

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*"...where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt 18:20*

We might well call this Sunday "Evangelism Sunday." In the first reading the prophet Ezekiel exhorts us, "[if] you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked from his way, the wicked shall die for his guilt, but I will hold you responsible for his death." How, then, are we to evangelize in the marketplace? As we "speak out" we fulfill our prophetic role, bestowed on us at baptism. To "speak out" is to proclaim the Gospel, in our words and most effectively through our actions. Our readings today show us this illuminated way: the Apostle Paul in the second reading proclaims, "...owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law," and Jesus in the Gospel directs us to resolve our grievances first to the individual, then the Church, then the secular governance, in that order.

We perfect our method of evangelizing as we mature in the Body of Christ through Lectio Divina, the Eucharist and ultimately praying without ceasing. As we en flesh the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we are animated to live and move and have our being as we emulate His life out into our community and the world. His life is the "God of Peace." In Ephesians 2:14 we are reminded that God is our peace, who has himself gathered the Christian community together, because it is Christ who "is himself our peace." The life of the Church must be marked by a continual quest for peace and unity. Peace and unity as the full realization here and now is the deepest identity of the Church. At this moment in time, realized at every consecration of the Eucharist, is the indwelling presence of the Body of Christ. This presence is the Light of Christ that truly "...dissuades the wicked from his way." This is transformative evangelization.

*"...whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven"* should be interpreted as the plural "you," the "you" of the whole Church at large. Peter, as keeper of the "keys" was granted the authority on the basis of his transcendent confession in an earlier Gospel. His authority was then passed on to us within the Body of the Church to bind and loose by virtue of the gift of the Holy Spirit imprinted within us at our baptism. The plural "you" is then to be exercised harmoniously, and never individually. The plural "you" then rises up through the keeper of the "keys" of heaven in every generation through our bishops, in apostolic succession, as they participate as one universal voice to bring about the healing and reconciliation of sin to those that have severed themselves from the Church. Through the power of the "keys" the confession of sinners binds them back to the Church, and by vertical extension, the mystical Body of Christ, where they again enjoy the consolations of the Kingdom of God.

In the final verses of today's Gospel we rest our hearts on the greatest miracle realized every day in our Christian Community, *"...where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* "In my name" is to gather in the peace of Christ. Unity of heart and mind within the Community is the beautiful symphonic harmony of our voices speaking, chanting, singing and praising God the Father as one voice. Through our "voices as one" we give thanks for the Gift of Salvation offered in the one sacrifice of Christ, on the cross and the altar of sacrifice at every Eucharistic Celebration now, and until the end of the age. As Jesus taught us, the Church brings God's Kingdom to earth. Our actions are celebrated by all His angels in heaven and delight the Heart of the heavenly Father.

**A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew**

Jesus said to his disciples:

*"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.  
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.'  
If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church.  
If he refuses to listen even to the church,  
then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector.*

*Amen, I say to you,  
whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven,  
and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

*Again, amen, I say to you,  
if two of you agree on earth  
about anything for which they are to pray,  
it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father.  
For where two or three are gathered together in my name,  
there am I in the midst of them."*

**The Gospel of the Lord**