

AUGUST 12, 2020  
Wednesday of the 19<sup>th</sup> Week in OT  
Matthew 18: 15-20

“I AM THERE AMONG THEM.”

In this time of pandemic, the new normal is we need to register, and count how many are presently attending the mass. For me, as I prepare hosts to be consecrated, I need to count how many people will potentially receive communion. Numbers are important but for Jesus, numbers did not seem an issue for Him. He appreciated the value of one as we heard yesterday gospel: the shepherd who left the ninety-nine sheep in search of the one who was lost. Then, in our gospel for today, He declares “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”<sup>1</sup>

My brothers and sisters, “the smallest gathering in a tiny church, whether for prayer or communal life, is hugely significant because the living Lord is present in the world through them. In these days of declining numbers within the church, the gospel may help us to appreciate the significance of those who are present, regardless of how few. We can never be complacent, of course, about those who are absent; we need to find new ways of calling them back. Yet, the Lord is present where two or three are gathered in His name; He is present among us as Emmanuel, “God-with-us. If we keep opening ourselves to the Lord’s presence among us, few though we may be, He will draw others to Himself through us.”<sup>2</sup>

Another important message of the gospel of today is how our Lord is teaching His disciples and us the best way to repair a damaged relationship. There are four steps: “If you feel you have been wronged by someone, Jesus says the first step is to speak directly but privately to the individual who has done the harm. One of the worst things we can do is brood over our grievance. This can poison our mind and heart and make it more

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 18: 20 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

<sup>2</sup> [www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie](http://www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie)

difficult to go directly to the person who caused the damage. Then the second step is to bring another person or persons, someone who is wise and gracious rather than someone who is hot-tempered or judgmental. The goal is not so much to put the offender on trial, but to persuade the offender to see the wrong and to be reconciled. And if this fails, then we must still not give up, but seek the help of the Christian community. Note the emphasis here is on restoring a broken relationship by seeking the help of other Christians who hopefully will pray and seek a solution for reconciliation based on Christian love and wisdom, rather than relying on coercive force or threat of legal action, such as a lawsuit. Lastly, Jesus seems to say that we have the right to abandon stubborn and obdurate offenders and treat them like social outcasts. The tax-collectors and Gentiles were regarded as "unclean" by the religious-minded Jews and they resorted to shunning them. However, we know from the Gospel accounts that Jesus often had fellowship with tax-collectors (as well as other public sinners), ate with them, and even praised them at times! Jesus refuses no one who is open to receive pardon, healing, and restoration."<sup>3</sup> Pray for the offender for healing and reconciliation and we must not stop understanding them.

Our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to be free from any harm, resentment, bitterness, and anger in our hearts. We must pray and ask Him to pour upon us His love so that we may forgive those who sinned against us. Only then that we can say that I'm a Christian and I am filled with love of Jesus. I can forgive because I was forgiven and love by Jesus. So, my brothers and sisters, forgive, make amend and repair damage relationships while we have the opportunity.

---

<sup>3</sup> [www.dailyscripture.net](http://www.dailyscripture.net)