

September 6, 2020

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ez 33:7-9

Rom 13:8-10

Mt 18:15-20

GROW: Pop quiz: What's the Seventh Commandment? Can you recite the other nine? At first glance, Paul's Letter to the Romans seems like an easy out. The commandments, he writes, "are summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Easy-peasy, right? Well, in this case the devil is not in the details, but in the totality. Most days, loving one's neighbor as yourself is harder than following the letter of the law. It means putting others first in a culture where rugged individualism is rewarded. In an everyday way, it means letting the person with four items and 23 coupons go in front of us at the grocery store, listening with an open mind to those with whom we disagree, or driving our parent to the doctor's office on a day we had hoped to attend our daughter's basketball game. When those situations come up, we know we don't have to go it alone. After all, God loved us first. As we move into the week ahead, we can ask God in prayer to open our hearts and minds to the needs of others, and help us love better by serving them, even when it's hard.

GO: Who doesn't love a romantic comedy? (Well, I can name four men of varying ages in my household.) Paul might have been one of them. His Letter to the Romans is more head than heart, grounded in rock-solid logic: "Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law." The line reminds me of one of the most famous tenets of the Hippocratic Oath: "First, do no harm." Surely, on some days, "doing no evil" or "doing no harm" may feel like enough. But as Christians, we can do so much more. I'm reminded of a generous couple who would pray together each morning asking God to show them how they could best help others. They understood the message of today's Gospel, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Knowing that Jesus was at their side, they prepared to face whatever the day brought them. Is there someone this week you can accompany on their faith journey, or invite to join you in Christian service?

PRAY: By starting the day with a simple prayer like this: "God, show me how I can serve others today," or "God, open my heart to the needs around me," we may be pleasantly surprised at the opportunities to grow in love that we encounter.