

Gospel Connection

SEPTEMBER 6, 2020: **Sunday 23 / Pentecost 14** [Prop. 18]

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone . . . 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 . . .

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Matthew 18: 15-20

The killing silence

The silence is deafening.

Family members and friends must tiptoe around them. Spouses, parents, children are held hostage by the silence. *Not in our family, we insist. Better to hold our tongues than set them off, we fear.* It may be alcoholism, drug addiction, physical abuse that tears the family apart; or a misunderstanding or conflict over finances, a divorce, a child’s rejection of the family’s culture or values that creates a tension that represses the family dynamic. It’s a silence that kills.

A student is struggling in school and doesn’t know how to ask for help or is afraid to seek out a teacher for fear of being labeled.

A youngster is the target of bullying. He or she is miserable but is too scared to say anything to an adult.

The project is failing; the business is going down the drain. The company has many savvy, experienced people who know what to do — but nothing is said, no one is consulted. This is a tough market — and any appearance of trouble or vulnerability will sink everything.

The surviving spouse is lost. The grief is more than he or she can bear. But they don’t want to be a burden — the children have enough going on in their lives. So the widow or widower becomes more and more isolated.

Regardless of the cause or circumstances, fear is the controlling agent.

Say nothing — it’ll just make things worse.

He won’t hear it.

She’ll never change her mind.

You’ll only get hurt.

Please, I can do this on my own. I’m fine.

And so, there is silence.

Silence — while hearts scream in agony and spirits shrivel and die.

Jesus’ challenges us in today’s Gospel not to tolerate the dysfunction in our lives or allow our judgements and disappointments to isolate us from others, but to confront those problems, misunderstandings and issues that divide us, grieve us, embitter us. More challenging still, Jesus says, is to face those situations in which our demands and expectations are the cause of such turmoil and then managing to put aside those wants and needs of ours that are exacting such a heavy cost from those we love. Christ calls us to the hard work of reconciliation, to be committed to seeking solutions not out of indignation or self-righteousness but out of a commitment to imitate and bring into our lives the great love and mercy of God.