

PASTORAL REFLECTION FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Sunday, February 12, 2023

*“If you are bringing your gift to the altar and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift at the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother, and then present your gift.” -Matthew 5:25*

If Matthew's Gospel has a crisis chapter, it's probably right here, in Chapter 5, in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is spelling out the cost of discipleship, and it's going to be a lot tougher than anyone thought. The commandments are going to be a lot more challenging than even Moses had imagined. For those who thought it was going to be all just "love one another" for all the world to see, now we get to the truth of the matter. It isn't just what others can see, what we do with our hands or utter with our tongues for people to hear. It's what we harbor in our hearts that matters as well. It's that grudge that's been in the family for years, the one we don't talk about anymore because we can't even remember how it started. It's the friend we've given up on and we can't even remember why. Or maybe we DO remember how it began, like it was yesterday and it still hurts. This is calling us to get serious, to go big or go home. And what if the other party has left this life before the issue could be reconciled and we think there's no chance now? It's too late?

I am convinced that reconciliation goes on after death. We can't expect to be happy in the afterlife with an unresolved issue, and we CAN reach across life boundaries with forgiveness if we are willing to try. Holy Mystery doesn't give up on us, nor does that Boundless Love allow us to give up on one another. You will notice Jesus sets no time limits on the reconciliation He requires. He just suggests that until we have at least tried, (maybe more than once or twice), we will find it difficult to come to prayer with integrity.

These are hard words that Jesus speaks in today's gospel, uncompromising words as the author of Matthew writes them, but they are spoken by a Spirit, an Inspiration, that credits us with being able to respond.

*Sister Chabanel Mathison, O.S.U.*

