

Homily
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One of the hardest responsibilities I had when I served on our School Sisters of Notre Dame province leadership team was providing an intervention for a sister who had an addiction issue. For us that usually meant an alcohol addiction, though occasionally she had a drug issue. We had plenty of resources from Sisters and other therapists who ministered in this field. We followed the protocols that were suggested. Still it was always very difficult and challenging to get them to accept treatment.

Many of you, I am sure, have also dealt with this and similar situations within your family and friends. Some of you have had to try to help your children who got into trouble. Some of you probably have had to take the car keys from a driver who was clearly unsafe or find a place for a family member who was no longer able to live in her or his home. We recognize that some situations are beyond our ability to handle, such as, sexual or other physical abuse or child molestation. These demand intervention of competent authorities.

Often the pain we experience is shared in our community at the time of the General Intercessions. I think about those we are unable to share. Some concerns remain in our hearts, too painful or private to say aloud. These day to day challenges continue even as we struggle with injustice and devastation in our country and our world. All of this feels so overwhelming at times.

In the Gospel reading today Jesus offers his disciples a method for church discipline when a member is failing to live according to the call she or he has received. The approach sounds fairly simple:

1. Approach the person – if that does not work
2. Take one or two others – if that does not work
3. Tell the church (for us this may mean other family members or friends) – if the person refuses to listen
4. Treat her or him as you would a Gentile or tax collector

Number 4 sounds a bit harsh! For many years I thought that meant the church would kick the person out the community. “We did all we could.”

Upon further reflection and reading commentaries on this passage, I ask – how did Jesus challenge the disciples to treat Gentiles and tax collectors? Matthew’s community in the 80’s and 90’s had many Gentiles – they were welcomed (with a bit of tension at times). Jesus ate with tax collectors – all were invited to hear and respond to the Gospel. This is church. This is community. This is who we are called to be.

In all our struggles, pain, joys, and hopes – personally, nationally, globally – we are community. This was a theme heard often at the church meeting held last Sunday. Two themes were repeated again and again to describe why we come to St. Cronan – social justice and community. Last week at Mass our closing song was one of confident hope in God-with-us: Canticle of the Turning. (the 10:00 group sang it exuberantly with clapping and keeping time on the pews. We sang all 4 verses – it is Mary’s Magnificat. If it were up to me, I would sing it every week; but fortunately we have a music director and choir with better music sense than I have). It is so hopeful and so trusting that God is with us.

Last week at our church meeting Johnny reminded us in his introduction that we as Christians are ekklesia, church, a people called out, a people in contrast to the culture, a community who cares deeply for all people.

Sometimes that means a vociferous challenge (many of us excel in this), and sometimes we are called to comfort and compassion (and many of us excel in this). Often we are called to both. We need discernment to know how God is calling us in a specific time and place.

We are a people called out, but we may forget that others are too – as Sister Margaret Guzzardo reminded us when she reported from her small group last Sunday. We may have a tendency sometimes to see ourselves as superior to other Christians, to parishes who do not seem to share the values we have. This surely is not part of God’s call to us. We too can fail to recognize other groups who are part of our larger community. This is something we can keep in our minds and hearts and catch ourselves when we think of expressing this. The Gentiles and tax collectors – beloved by Christ – are ekklesia, church, community.

We are gathered to break the bread of our lives with one another in this Eucharist, to be bread broken and shared with the world. We are called to be challenge and comfort **now**, in 2026. May this celebration, this sharing, this eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Christ give us the strength and hope we need **now**.