

I know this could never happen here or among any of you....
But I hear it happens elsewhere.

A person has a problem with a co-worker,
But rather than talk to the co-worker directly,
They first of all tell their friends, and then they complain to their boss.

OR....A parent has a problem with something their child's teacher does,
But rather than talk to the teacher one on one,
they make an appointment to see the principal.

OR....someone has a problem with a member of the pastoral team,
But they don't go to the team member to discuss it.
Instead they go to the pastor.

OR...someone has a problem with the pastor,
But they don't go to the pastor to talk over the problem.
They, instead write a letter to the bishop.

Each of those scenarios, as I said...
that I'm sure could never happen here but happen elsewhere,
fly in the face of what Jesus is talking about in our gospel today.

For in our gospel today Jesus provides a step by step instruction
on how to deal with someone when they have hurt you
or when they disagree with you
or when they do something you think is not right.

Step one, he says, is to go and talk to the person yourself...
One on one, *mano et mano, womano et womano*,
Go and discuss it with them first.

I happen to agree with Jesus and I try to live by it.
If someone comes to me questioning something
that one of our team members has done about,
my first question is usually, Have you spoken to them yourself?
My second question is, "would you be willing to do so?"

Why do I do that, because that's the model Jesus gave to us.
If your brother (and I think we can safely add sister) sins against you
Go and tell him the fault between you and him alone...

That's the first step, not go to the boss, not go to the principal,
not go to the pastor, not go to the bishop.
Go to the one you have the problem with.

But what if they don't listen?

Then you do step two:

"take along with you one or two others that every fact may be
established on the testimony of two or three witnesses."

This step challenges us to make sure the problem isn't our own.
The step causes us to see if others in the community agree.

So you do that and they still don't listen, then you refer it to the Church.

Maybe then you go to the principal, maybe then you go to the priest,

Maybe then you go to the bishop...

But you do that only after you have done steps one and two.

And finally, if they still won't listen,

then Jesus says treat them as you would a tax collector or gentile.

Many people hearing that in Jesus time

would take that to mean that you should ignore them.

That how most good Jews treated tax collectors and gentile.

They simply had nothing to do with them.

But if we want to use Jesus as a model,

We need to ask, "how did he treat tax collectors and gentiles?"

We don't have to look to far to see that he sought them out....

He spent time with them...

He walked with them and talked with them and ate with them...

And in doing so he scandalized the scribes and the Pharisees.

Remember them saying,

"This man is a friend of tax collectors and sinners"?

"He even eats with them."

When they said this, they said it as an insult.

But I am sure that Jesus took it as a compliment....

Jesus wanted us to see that God reaches out to those who are lost.

God reaches out to those who are astray.

And so if we have followed Jesus' four-step process, we end up befriending and loving and treating with kindness, even the ones who have hurt us.

There is a famous story told of Abraham Lincoln.

The civil war had just ended.

A group of die-hard confederate soldiers
gained an audience with the President

His kind, friendly, and gentle manner won over the former enemies
and they left his office with a new-found respect for the President.

A union officer saw the exchange and said to President Lincoln,

You should not befriend the enemy---you should destroy them.

Lincoln smiled and replied,

“Do I not destroy the enemy when I make them my friend?”

To which I think Jesus would say, “Now you go and do the same!”