

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

September 10, 2023 • 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time • Matthew 18:15–20

Words and Actions

Jesus tells his disciples if someone close to you sins against you, go to that person one-on-one and try to set things straight. If the person will not listen, bring someone else with you and confront the person. If that doesn't work, bring them in front of the whole church. If even that fails, let them go. Do not allow them to hurt you again.

As a church and as a family, we are responsible for each other's welfare. Loving my brother and sister as myself, the way Jesus commands, means being concerned not only for their physical welfare, but also their spiritual welfare. This is especially true in families.

As parents, we have been told that our children's faith formation is our responsibility. We help them grow in their faith by sharing what we believe about God and our church through our words and actions. Clearly, we have not only the right, but also the responsibility, to talk to our children and take action when they are doing something wrong.

Parents should also be aware that children are often capable of giving them the same guidance. Sometimes a child's words or actions offer a subtle insight into our own actions or lack of action. Without even meaning to, children can give us clear signals about how we are doing as their primary role model.

A young person acting out can sometimes be a clear warning sign that we are not spending enough time with them, or we are overindulging them. Sometimes it's their words that hit the mark.

"Why doesn't Daddy go to church?" or "How come we have so much, and other people have so little?"

For centuries, the Christian family has been called the domestic church. What holds true for

congregational churches also holds true for the church that gathers around the kitchen table. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (v. 20). We need to listen to our children's actions and words and remember that sometimes Jesus can speak very clearly through the words of a child.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Have a simple family reconciliation service. Talk about how easy it is to hurt the people closest to you. Say a prayer asking God to help you consider the ways you have hurt each other. Ask each person to write down or draw a picture of his or her offenses. Share what you have written and say you are sorry. (A parent should begin the process.) Close with a prayer.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

Is there anyone in your life who is hurting you and whom you need to confront? How can you be most effective in doing this? What do you want to remember from last week? What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?