

My Brothers and Sisters,

I frequently make the point that the Christianity of Jesus is a Christianity of church or community. In today's Gospel, Jesus spells out some of the qualities of a Christian community. At the end of today's Gospel, he promises, "*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" There is a real presence of Christ wherever Christians are striving to live Christian lives together in families or communities.

Second, Christian communities are communities of prayer through, with, and in Christ. Jesus teaches us that one of the primary responsibilities of Christians in community is to pray with and for each other: "*Again, (amen,) I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father.*" Thursday we celebrated Charlie McConahay's funeral. Two of Charlie's favorite sayings were that God is in control and God is always working for us.

Third, like all other human communities, Christian communities need leadership. Therefore, in this passage, Jesus gives the other apostles some of the same authority he gave Peter, the power of binding and loosing, i.e., the power to make binding rules, and the power to abolish or dispense with those rules. Just as Jesus called the apostles to co-responsibility for the Church, he also calls us to be co-responsible for the Church.

Finally, because the Church is made up of human beings, there will be conflicts. Jesus provides a process for resolving those conflicts. If someone sins against us, we are told not to make a big deal over it but go and discuss it one-on-one with the person. If that does not work, take one or two others, especially those who know the people or the circumstances. Only if that does not work should the larger community be involved. This is completely opposite the way conflicts are handled today where everything goes viral! Conflicts can destroy communities. Jesus wants us to resolve them in a way that is least disruptive to the community. This might be a good lesson for all of us in all of our families and communities.

In today's first reading, God appointed Ezekiel "*watchman for the house of Israel.*" In other words, as prophet, Ezekiel was responsible for the people of Israel. It was his responsibility to proclaim God's word to the people. Likewise, all of us have some responsibility for the Church, some responsibility for proclaiming God's word to the people. As a Church we are called to witness to each other and to the world the truth of the Gospel. All of us are called to support one another in faith. This is especially true for parents.

My brothers and sisters, according to St. Paul, love is the fulfillment of the law. All the specific commandments are summed up in the second great commandment of the New Covenant, "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*" Authentic love will do no evil to anyone. The question that arises is why we still need the more specific commandments. It is because of human weakness and sinfulness. We still need to know in the concrete what we must do and what we must not do. The specific commandments create boundaries for our actions so that we, in fact, we love authentically and do no harm to anyone.