

Fraternal Correction: Our Christian responsibility.

Sometimes in the Bible we come across certain passages that are as relevant and practical in our lives today as they were thousands of years ago when they were first written. Today's readings are good examples of such passages. Together they remind us that *as faithful Christians, it is our responsibility to reach out to our not-so-faithful brothers and sisters and bring them back into the fold.* They give us some very practical recommendations on how to go about doing this. It's all about **fraternal correction**.

No one is born a saint or sinner. It is the choices or decisions that we make at various times that lead one to holiness or sinfulness. Then why do we say the human heart is tending towards sin?

We know that a bit of pleasure is attached to the thoughts and deeds that we call sin. Man does it, not because he wants to do sin, but not having the strength to say no to the pleasure attached to it. One may fall not because of ignorance, but because he loses the strength to resist temptation. It is in this human helplessness that we need the help of others.

B&S, is it not a blessing to have someone who can tell us that there are failures in my journey, to insist that we need to change ways and give us some holy inspiration. It's then that we get greater strength to say no to our certain wrong choices. Isn't that great, that when we lament that it is no longer possible for me, and someone saying that you can do it? Saints are born, not because there aren't failures, but because there is the willingness to correct and to be corrected.

B&S, to correct does not mean to humiliate. Criticism and correction are two different things. If you have a mind that finds joy in finding fault, or telling aloud other's faults, anyone can criticize. But correction is an attempt to make another grow. There should be fraternal love in it, and then only you will be able to correct without hurting or humiliating, taking into consideration, the feeling of the one corrected.

Jesus was fully aware about the hurt that can be inflicted upon the one corrected while being corrected. That is why, He invited us to correct personally in private. Correcting with care and love is the right qualification in fraternal correction.

There's is the story of a young woman, **Cristina**, who strayed from the church as a teenager. After nine years of wandering, experimenting with atheism and new age, she found her way back again to the church, by the grace of God. Relating to her story, Christina said that what hurt her the most in all her nine years of spiritual exile is the feeling that *nobody in the church missed her. Nobody ever phoned or visited to find out what went wrong.* "I got the impression that the church does not want me," she said. Of course, the church wants her. But what are we doing to help the many men and women in similar situation find their way back into communion with the church? Today's readings invite us to review our *indifference* towards fallen members of the church, reminding us that, yes, it should be our business also to reach out to them.

Why should it be our business whether someone else choose to serve God or not? Our first reading from Ezekiel is very clear: if the wicked happen to die in his wickedness, I will hold you responsible for his death! As members of the church, and disciples, we are also God's spokespersons. What is imp. is, how to bring an erring member back into the fold, to reconciliation and full communion with God and with the community. The motivation for this kind of Christian action is to "regain" your lost brother or sister, to restore the broken relationship, not primarily to *denounce or find out* who is right or wrong.

Correction that is harsh, negative, and humiliating defeats the very purpose of Christian living. It is damaging not only to the one corrected but also undermines what Jesus is all about. He seeks growth, not deterioration. He wants to build us up, not put us down. Tearing down is not building up the Christian family. Why would anyone who is thinking about becoming a good Christian, want to join us if they are seeing that sometimes how badly we relate to others?