

Shared Leadership in the Community

Intro. Some of us belong to one of the many civic clubs or organizations in our community. Regular attendance is strongly encouraged. One group I belonged to had a gentle way to remind members of their absences or tardiness. There was a wheel with numbers from one to twenty; each represented a dollar. A late or absent member would spin the wheel and pay a small fine. If there was only one infraction, the most possible was twenty dollars. It wasn't the money. It was also the teasing that went along with being called out for her or his failure to meet the group's rules of attendance. A long absence triggered a visit to the missing brother or sister to see if there was serious reason. In the gospel, the Lord proposed a way to correct members of the Christian community.

I. This chapter begins with asking who is the greatest in the kingdom of God. The Lord uses a child to answer that question: humility and care for the most vulnerable marks the best of the community. The parable of the sheep that went astray and was found followed. Mercy and love are the guiding values so far. In today's gospel the Lord speaks about bringing back someone who *hasn't* left the community but needs a reminder of some sin or fault that harms the community. The steps to do this are found in Jewish scripture, most notable, Leviticus 19:17, "You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself." The first step is to solve the conflict quietly, one on one. Failing that, one or two people more objective should try. Then the larger community. After that, the brother or

sister loses their place in the community. But the community continues to pray for their return. In today's gospel the Lord gives us a broader understanding of leadership; it is not just one person, but rather it is the whole community that shares in the responsibility to lead. On one day Peter showed leadership qualities by recognizing the Lord as Messiah. On another day he almost led the community away from its mission. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read how Paul, James or others showed leadership in dealing with problems in the church community. In order to stay true to its mission whether family or church or even a work place, a community has authority to lead, guide and when necessary correct its members.

Concl. That said, there is wisdom in *lovingly* reconciling differences together. It may take a few

tries but done in love and with as much kindness as possible, the one who needs correction has the opportunity to recognize the wrong and return to the work of that community. Prayer must be part of that. We are encouraged to pray before we go to a sister or brother for reconciliation. Then the chances are better for a positive result. Leadership is not just one person, but the whole community. Not accepting loving correction puts a brother or sister at risk of becoming lost. More important than any civic organization, the Christian community works to encourage its members to stay part of the family of God and rejoices in its success.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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