

HOMILY 23rd SUN OT YRA 2017

“Friends do not let friends drive drunk.” Do you remember this campaign a number of years ago? For some reason this really struck me. What if I did not say anything and someone gets DUI? That is going to follow them for the rest of their lives as it never comes off your record. What if they hurt themselves? I would feel terrible. What if they hurt someone else? They would have to live with that for the rest of their lives. I would like to reword that slogan to take in many other things. “Friends do not let friends ruin their lives.”

The readings today are all about the Christian responsibility we have to one another. The first Christian responsibility is the responsibility to speak. In the first reading, God is telling the prophet Ezekiel that he has the responsibility to speak, even if it is uncomfortable. We have this responsibility to our family, our friends, and to our parish community. I think one of the great advantages of being an active part of a Catholic parish is the Catholic community. We are part of a sacred community and we have a responsibility to one another. “Friends so not let friends ruin their lives.”

The second Christian responsibility is love. We always have a responsibility to speak with love and great reverence and respect for one another. Sometimes we confuse love with permissiveness. Now many things are just not very important and the loving thing is just to let them go, but if you see someone about to make a serious mistake, you have a responsibility to intervene. Do not judge them, do not condemn them, do not be condescending, but find a loving way to tell them.

The Gospel reading outlines how we should approach this. The first step is to go to the individual and keep it private. If you are talking about a conflict between the two of you be sure and observe the 24 hour cooling off period. And if there is a conflict between the two of you,

you probably have to forgive them before you have the conversation. And it may not be a whole conversation; it may be a brief statement. Someone told me that a friend of theirs was thinking about having an extra marital affair, and the friend knew that she saw what was going on. This is what she decided to say to her friend: “Be careful you do not throw away something very beautiful. I am praying for you.” That is all that she said. They had no discussion. Her friend came back to her later and thanked her. She said it kind of brought me to my senses and I realized what I was risking. And sometimes it is easier to have a conversation with someone you do not know very well. Sometimes your friends and family are too caught up in the situation. I have been amazed at what people that I have sat next to on a plane have discussed with me. But they probably just needed a sounding board and they will never see me again.

And you may need to get a third person involved, not to gang up on them but to help them. When we talk about others when does it become gossip? I think you have to give it the love test. If you are talking about someone to run them down, to just let someone know that you know a secret, to turn someone else against them, etc. it is gossip. If you are talking to a third party for help figuring out how to handle the situation, that passes the love test. The third party may act as a bridge; the person is unlikely to listen to you but may listen to the third party, as long as it is not a breach of confidentiality or just shirking your responsibility, that may pass the love test.

And sometimes we have to report something to someone else. Suspected child abuse is one example. I am a mandatory reporter. I have done it a few times. It is very difficult to do, but I have to do it. Someone is suicidal, going to hurt themselves or others, a minor involved in high risk behavior are some examples.

And last but not least, pray, pray, pray, every step of the way. God will help you.