

HOMILY 23RD Sunday Ordinary Time

September 6, 2026

During my 23 years as a priest, I have met with many individuals. One of the issues that has come up consistently over the years is about families that have grown apart. People usually do not come to me at the time things happen. People are more likely to come to me as they get older and realize time is limited. The older generation is aging and getting sick. There are relatives that they were once close to that they have not seen in years. Something happened years ago and there have been divisions in the family and they have grown apart. When I ask them what happened they usually do not know. They just know that family members are mad or not speaking or estranged. When things have been going on for years it is difficult to straighten them out. It is best to prevent this from happening.

In the Gospel reading Jesus says, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.” This applies not only to family members but to anyone you have a disagreement with. Don’t just keep it bottled up until you explode. You should do it soon. Give it the 24-hour cooling off period, you will not accomplish anything if either of you are still angry. If you let it go on too long it will take on a life of its own. I am not speaking to you, and you do not seem to care that I am not speaking to you and now I am mad about that. It is going to become more difficult to resolve if I am mad and not speaking to you and I am not even sure why. It is important to keep it between the two of you. What can happen is that the two of you talk to everyone in the family except the one you have an issue with. People may start to take sides and then the whole family gets involved. What you have said to other family members will get back to the individual who is involved and it will be their interpretation of what you are thinking that will probably not be very accurate. Sometimes we tell a family member expecting them to solve it for you. I will tell Dad and maybe he will get involved in straightening things out. Unless you are a

child, that is an unreal expectation. You may get a third party involved if you think they can help you solve the issue but ask them not to tell anyone; keep it confidential. You will handle it.

When we talk about working it out with the other person, that requires that you talk it out either by phone or in person. You should avoid doing this through text or through email. That is fraught with misinterpretation. Several years ago, I sent someone an email and my computer was on caps. I got an email back, ‘why are you mad at me.’ I did not know at the time what it meant. Or “I texted you an hour ago and you have not texted me back. You do not want to be my friend anymore?” I am just not too attentive to my phone. I have had several people come to my office and they want me to read a series of texts and interpret them. I cannot do that. You need to talk to them.

A good way to break the ice when there is a conflict is with a good apology. Usually when there is a conflict both parties contribute to it. A good apology has 5 points. I am sorry, I was wrong, please forgive me, I will not do it again, what can I do to make this right. Then you stop talking and allow the other person to respond. If you continue from there you are giving all the reasons why you were justified in doing what you did, and it is no longer a good apology. It just makes things worse.

Conflict can arise in our Parish Family and that is one of the reasons for our Councils and Commissions. Every year the Parish Pastoral Council members introduce themselves on one of the weekends. Their pictures are on the wall near the church front doors. We encourage you to bring issues and suggestions to one of them. There are representatives from all of the Commissions on the PPC. If you bring a Christian Service issue or suggestion to one of the Council members, we will discuss it at a meeting, and the Christian Service Representative will bring it back to their commission. You can always meet with me. All you have to do is call the office and make an appointment.