

PRAYER AND ACTION

September 6, 2005

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Invite persons present to pause for a few moments of silent recollection and to offer any special intentions.)

It's the beginning of a new school year, and already life is more than full. Small wonder that we are filled with a myriad of emotions. We might be wondering where the summer has gone; it seems to go by faster every year. At the same time, we're thankful for the time we've had to recharge our batteries. Anxiety and excitement are also probably welling up inside: excitement over all the opportunities we'll have to be involved in something truly meaningful, but anxiety, too, as we realize the tremendous responsibility that comes with our vocation in Catholic education. And then there are the events in our world-wide community. Our hearts are brimming with empathy for all our neighbors to the south who are trying to cope with their shattered lives in the wake of hurricane Katrina. As these few examples illustrate, tension is a constant companion in this life and that isn't a bad thing. Tension is simply a reality; the sooner we recognize that and learn to use in positive ways the energy tension produces, the better off we'll be.

Speaking of tension, in this Sunday's gospel Jesus provides some very practical ideas of how to deal with specific sources of tension.

Reader 1: Jesus spoke to his disciples: "If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the brother or sister listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the brother or sister refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Reader 2: Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or more are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

Leader: In the first half of this reading, Jesus gives us guidelines of how to respond to the tension generated by sin. It's interesting to note that Jesus advocates direct action. How many of us choose to allow relational problems to fester, allowing them to develop into a cancer that infiltrates and poisons our minds and hearts and relationships? How much better would it be if we dealt with such relational sins head on as Jesus advises? The other truth apparent in Jesus' words is that the larger community also has responsibility for dealing with breakdown in relationships. These are important words for us to consider as we begin this new school year during which we will be constantly relating to students, parents and co-workers.

In the second half of the gospel, Jesus clearly articulates the incredible influence we have in this life. Our actions of binding and loosing here on earth will produce the same results in heaven. Whatever two or more of us agree to pray for will be done by our Father in heaven as long as we gather in Jesus' name. Do we understand what is being said here?

Do we believe and accept the incredible power we have in this life? This is our Lord and Saviour talking: we need to listen, understand and live accordingly.

As we begin this new school year, how will we as a community of Christ's disciples choose to use our collective power?

All: Lord Jesus, when we reflect on your life as revealed in the gospels, we see that your deep prayer life was always backed up by your ability to act in accordance with your prayer. Help us to be serious in our desire to follow your example. Help us accept the challenge to be persons of both prayer and action. We pray especially for our sisters and brothers so tragically affected by Katrina. Be with us as we collectively choose actions which put flesh to our heartfelt prayer. Amen.