

JUNE 12 2025, FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

This Gospel includes some pretty harsh words from Jesus. It's part of the Sermon on the Mount—the first of five major discourses in the Gospel of Matthew—and we should take His words to heart.

Jesus tells us: if you are offering your gift at the altar, and remember that someone has something against you, leave your gift and go first to be reconciled. Then come back to offer your gift. It's that important.

Saint Paul, in today's first reading to the Corinthians, touches on a similar theme. He writes about the discord in the community at Corinth and how “the god of this age”—with a lowercase “g,” meaning the devil—“has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, so that they may not see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ.” There's a veil over many hearts. And even as practising Christians, many of us still live with that veil of darkness.

We can attend Mass every Sunday—or even daily—but if we're not instruments of peace in our own families, there will never be peace in the world. It's that simple, and that difficult. So many families today experience deep discord. I encounter this constantly—not just in my own family, but among the faithful I minister to. Conflicts among siblings, especially over money or inheritance, are sadly common. Caregiving for aging parents often becomes another source of division: “I do everything, and they do nothing!” That kind of resentment tears families apart.

How, then, can we be instruments of peace within our own families? The answer, though simple, is not easy: humility. It means slowing down, not getting emotionally caught up, and doing what is right without insisting on being right.

There's a beautiful example in the life of Saint Francis of Assisi. A man named Sylvester of Assisi, a Canon of the Church, once sold bricks to Francis. Later, Sylvester claimed he hadn't been paid enough. Rather than argue, Saint Francis simply gave him more money. No resistance, no dispute—just peace. What an example. If someone demands more than their fair share, let them have it. It won't make them happy. But it may bring peace.

I've known siblings who haven't spoken to each other for years. Children who have cut off contact with their parents. When people share these stories with me, I often suggest a simple step: send a card. A few words—"I'm thinking of you," "I love you," "I've forgiven you," or "I'm at peace on my side"—can do wonders. Reconciliation often begins with a humble gesture.

We're not better than anyone else. As Christians, we are called to reach out. In 2 Corinthians, Paul writes, "Those who have the Spirit of God find freedom." That freedom comes in healthy, loving relationships—but we have to work at it.

Programs like Alcoholics Anonymous are based on beautiful Christian principles. Steps 8 and 9 are especially powerful: making a list of all those we've hurt, and then making amends. It's easy to name those who have wronged us. But we must also name those we have wronged. Maybe it's an ex-spouse, a sibling, a colleague. Through humility and grace, we can seek forgiveness and offer it.

If we want peace in the world, it must begin with us. It's easy to look at global conflicts and point fingers—missile for missile, war for war—but we have to be willing to sit down, let go of past wrongs, and start anew. Stop keeping score. Choose peace over pride.

It is so simple, and yet so hard. And it can only be done through Christ. Christ is love. When we surrender our lives to Him, He softens our

hearts. He gives us the courage to take the lower road, to let go of control, and to become instruments of His peace.

We are small, powerless creatures. We cannot control others; we barely control ourselves. But we are called to love. To forgive. To make peace. Amen.