

## AUGUST 13 2025 FATHER FRANCIS SALASAR

Imagine this: Two members of the church choir, let's call them Evelyn and Robert, haven't spoken in weeks. It started small – Evelyn thought Robert sang too loudly during the duet, drowning her out. Robert felt Evelyn deliberately sang off-key behind him in retaliation. Whispers started. Sides were taken. The joyful anthem they were rehearsing began to sound strained, discordant. The music director noticed the tension, the icy glances, the absence of the usual post-rehearsal coffee together. The beautiful harmony they were meant to offer was being choked by unresolved conflict. Sound familiar? It's a scene plays out not just in choir but in families, workplaces, and neighborhoods. This example makes it clear that conflict is inevitable. But what happens *next*? That's where Jesus, in today's Gospel brings about a revolutionary and challenging blueprint: **The Sacred Art of Repair and Reconciliation.**

Jesus doesn't sugarcoat it. He acknowledges sin will happen: **“If your brother or sister sins against you...”** Notice the assumption isn't *if* conflict arises, but *when*. And His response isn't avoidance (“Just ignore it”), gossip (“You won't believe what they did!”), or retaliation (“I'll show them who I am!”). Instead, He offers a radical, step-by-step process designed not for punishment, but for *restoration*. Jesus' way is honest confrontation in love, guided by truth and humility, aimed not at punishment but at *reconciliation*.

Jesus begins: **“If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you.”**

Notice He doesn't say: “Tell your friends first,” or “Post it on social media.” He says: *Go*. This requires courage, vulnerability and love. It means swallowing our pride, resisting the urge to vent to others first, and believing in the possibility that the offense might be a misunderstanding, or that our own perception might be flawed. This invitation is not to win an argument, but to win the person. It's not about being right, but about doing what's right.

And in this process, the goal is Not judgment, Not revenge but **Reconciliation**. **“If they listen to you, you have regained your brother or sister.”** That's restoration. That's grace.

If one-on-one doesn't work, Jesus says to bring one or two others//— again, not to gang up, but to help. These are trusted peacemakers, not biased cheerleaders. Their presence keeps the conversation honest, humble, and healing. This step also reminds us that conflict affects the wider community. When reconciliation fails, the body of Christ suffers. That's why involving others becomes necessary—not for gossip, but for guidance.

If the person still refuses to listen, the matter goes to the community. But let's be clear: Jesus is not calling for public shaming. He's reminding us that the Church is a healing body, not a courtroom. It exists to reconcile, not to punish.

Even the last resort—treating the person “as a Gentile or a tax collector”—must be seen through the eyes of Jesus. How did Jesus treat Gentiles and tax collectors? He loved them, ate with them, and welcomed them. This isn't excommunication in the spirit of hatred—it is a sorrowful letting go// with continued hope for return.

And Jesus concludes, **“Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”**

This verse is quite often quoted but this is not just about a prayer meeting or Sunday Mass with low attendance. Jesus is saying this in the context of reconciliation: *When you gather to seek peace, to repair what was broken, to forgive and be forgiven—there I am.* Reconciliation is sacred work. It's not just psychological healing—it's *spiritual communion*. Every healed relationship becomes a holy place where Christ dwells.

St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:18: ***“God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.”***

That ministry is now ours. Every time we forgive, every time we seek healing, every time we speak truth in love—we bring Christ into the world. He is present whenever we dare to practice the sacred, difficult, heaven-ratified grammar of repair and reconciliation.