

The Twenty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time
Homily ~September 4, 2011

Rev. Andrew A. Czajkowski
The Catholic Community of
St. John the Evangelist &
Blessed Sacrament

A while back, a letter was sent to advice columnist Ann Landers in the *Flint Journal*.

Dear Ann Landers,

I've suddenly become aware that the years are flying by. I love my family, but we have grown apart. I think of my mother and her sister, who haven't spoken to each other in five years. As a result of their argument, my cousins and I haven't spoken either. What a waste of precious time.

Wouldn't it be terrific if a special day could be set aside to reach out and make amends? We could call it "Reconciliation Day."

Everyone would vow to write a letter or make a phone call and mend a strained or broken relationship. This day could be the starting place. We could go from here to heal the wounds in our heart and rejoice in a brand new beginning.

Signed: Van Nuys

Ann's response was this,

Dear Van Nuys,

What a great idea. I propose that every year at this time we do just that—that we celebrate Reconciliation Day and pick up the phone or write a letter to connect with someone who might be in pain or someone who is locked out.

I don't know if Reconciliation Day ever got off the ground. But it certainly is a great idea, particularly with our lesson for today. Jesus says,

"If your brother or sister sins against you go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother."

Reconciliation is at the heart of the Christian faith. After all, hasn't Christ reconciled us to God? We are called to be a reconciling people. If so, then we are to be reconciled with one another. Therefore, if someone has something against us, or if someone has done something to us, rather than striking out in anger, we are to go to that person and seek to be reconciled.

For a relationship to be restored, someone has to take the first step. Taking the first step is usually the business of the one who is closer to Christ. Reconciliation is tied to the cross. It is because Christ reconciled us through his death on Calvary that we are able to take the first step to be reconciled with those who hurt us. After all, God took the first step to heal the rupture with humanity; now we are to take the first step in healing any ruptures in relationships with others.

Here we may recall the story of the famous feud between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. The feud began when Jefferson defeated Adams in his bid for second term as President. On the eve of his inauguration, Jefferson went to the White House to tell Adams he hoped they could still be friends. Before Jefferson could say a word, Adams began ranting, "You have turned me out! You have turned me out!"

For eleven years, they did not talk. Then some of Jefferson's neighbors visited Adams. The old man burst out, "I always loved Jefferson and I still love him."


The neighbors brought that message to Jefferson who urged a mutual friend to let Adams know of his affections. Adams responded with a letter and so began a correspondence that is among the greatest in American history. The relationship was healed, but somebody had to take the first step.

Reconciliation is what this Christian faith of ours is all about. Who's going to take the first step? It will normally be the one who is closer to Christ.

When it comes to damage control, all of us are tempted to strike back. All of us are tempted to hold on to resentments even to the point of allowing precious relationships to be severed. But what would Jesus have us do?

It's clear to us in today's passage from our Brother and Teacher and Lord. Jesus would have us take the first step. Let's make today our Reconciliation Day.

St. John the Evangelist
≈ 140th Jubilee ≈

1871  2011