

LOVE ENOUGH TO CARE: See. Speak. Restore.



There was once a man who watched his neighbor making poor choices. He saw the effects on his family and work, but he stayed silent. He thought, "It's none of my business. He may get offended." Months later, things got worse. The neighbor said to him, "You saw what was happening. Why didn't you say something?" He replied, "I was afraid of losing your friendship." The neighbor answered, "I needed a friend who loved me enough to tell me the truth." That story is at the heart of this weekend's readings.

God appointed Ezekiel as a watchman for Israel. Not to control or condemn, but to watch, warn, and care. By our baptism we have been called to function as watchmen. We are not responsible for everyone, but we are responsible for those God has placed within our reach. Parents are watchmen for their children, spouses for one another, friends for friends, and priests for their parish. As St. Basil the Great teaches, we are members of one body and cannot say the other is none of our business. To see with love means seeing the person behind the problem. A young person may not need another angry lecture, but someone willing to listen. A parishioner who stopped coming to Mass may not need, "We haven't seen you in church!" but rather, "We miss you. Is everything okay?" St. Gregory the Great warns us about silence when he says that the preacher who remains silent when he should rebuke becomes responsible for the loss.

After seeing comes speaking. Jesus says, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone." He does not say tell everyone or post it on social media. He says go to him alone. St. John Chrysostom explains why: "to correct in private is to heal, not to shame. To expose a brother in public makes him more stubborn, not more holy." Before speaking, we should ask: Is it necessary? Is it the right time? Am I speaking out of love or out of anger? St. Augustine is blunt: "If you fail to rebuke your brother when you see him doing wrong, you become worse than he is." But he adds, let love be the root, otherwise you satisfy yourself, not heal him.

The goal is not to win an argument, but to win back a brother. As Jesus says, "If he listens to you, you have won over your brother." Love does not pretend that nothing happened, but it says, "Our relationship is worth fighting for." We also need humility to receive corrections. Sometimes God speaks through our spouse, our child, or a friend. St. Benedict reminds us "to hate faults but love the brothers, lest we break the vessel while trying to remove the rust." St. Paul gives the foundation: "Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another." Christian love is therefore not a feeling but a decision and responsibility to notice, listen, speak, correct, give another chance, and refuse to abandon people unnecessarily. Dear friends who is God asking you to build a bridge with this week?

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