

It is an Act of Love to...Admonish the Sinner

A Bonus Meeting for Groups Using the 2009 CFM Program Book, *Works of Mercy, Acts of Love*

Gather

Opening Prayer

Lord, we ask for your blessing and your mercy as we seek to follow you. We know that we have all sinned and need your mercy. Help us to love others as you love them, desiring your mercy also for them. Help us to learn how to help others attain your mercy. Teach us to correct those who have fallen from your grace with compassion, kindness and humility so that we ourselves may not be judged. Amen.

Report on Actions

Scripture Reflection

“Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly, immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry. Because of these the wrath of God is coming upon the disobedient. By these you too once conducted yourselves, when you lived in that way. But now you must put them all away, anger, fury, malice, slander, and obscene language out of your mouths. Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator....”

“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. If one has a grievance against another, as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3: 5-10, 12-17 NRSV).

“Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive” (Luke 17:3 NRSV).

--When the reader of these scriptures is instructed to admonish one another, who are they telling us to admonish - believers or people who don’t know Jesus Christ?

--How do these scriptures encourage us to right behavior? How can we use these scriptures to encourage right behavior with those we encounter?

Social Inquiry

“It is much easier to demolish our brother than to admonish him. It is safer to remain indifferent when our sister sins than to correct her. It is more tempting to nag our youth than to reprove them gently but seriously. Easier or not, whether risky or safe, the prophets and the saints admonished the people of their day; and Jesus Himself admonishes all who follow Him, and He commands them to do the same (cf. Mt 18:15).” --Homily of Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted, March 6, 2008, internet source: www.catholicsun.org

Popular culture tells us not to impose our values on others and that tolerance is more highly regarded than admonition. Brotherly correction is considered sticking your nose in another’s business. Yet, in fact, these objections provide convenient excuses not to love our neighbor in truth and not to speak the truth in love. However, admonition is not condemnation. It is not an attack on another person or an attempt to control one’s behavior. It is a reminder of what has been temporarily forgotten. The person who admonishes cares for the long term well-being of the person corrected. If one were to take pleasure in the thought of admonishing another, then the motivation would be faulty. We admonish our neighbors because we love them, because we cannot and will not stand by and watch them spiraling downward to personal destruction. Christ has reconciled us to the Father and to one another through His Cross and He has commissioned us to continue His mission. The work of reconciliation demands honest speaking and patient listening, with prudence and courage.

“You should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner’s* soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).

St. Thomas Aquinas writes, “The greatest kindness one can render to any man consists in leading him from error to truth.” Fraternal correction is a loving act, because it seeks to help our brothers and sisters attain their greatest good and happiness, God in Heaven.

“My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

“Judge not, that you be not judged” (Mt 7:1) is often misinterpreted as Christ forbidding us to judge. The verses following teach something different – the importance of looking at oneself before attempting to help another. “You hypocrite, remove the wooden beam in your own eye first, *then* you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother’s eye.” We are to evaluate ourselves, make the necessary changes, and then we can see clearly to help others.

Observe

1. What are the risks we take when we correct another person?
2. What are the possible benefits when we take that risk?
3. Ask someone or think about a time when you yourself were corrected? How was it done? How did you respond?
4. Read Romans 3:23 (“since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”). How does this help us to understand faults in others and faults in ourselves?

Judge

1. What is the difference between helping someone see their errors and pronouncing judgment?
2. How can pointing out a fault to a brother be an act of charity?
3. Are we called to admonish an unbeliever?
4. What should our response be when admonition is rejected

Act

1. Say a prayer not to get defensive. Then ask your spouse, another family member or close friend to tell you an area in which they see you need to grow.
2. In my family are there persons with whom I struggle because of sinful actions? Can I reach out to be an agent of love for that person(s) and talk to them about it?
3. If you see an area in a fellow Christian’s life that is out of order. Pray about how you might speak to them about it so they can accept it without feeling judged. Pray for the person after the admonition as well.

Look Ahead to the Next Meeting

1. Date
2. Time
3. Place
4. Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend
5. Look ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting.
6. Who could we invite to join our group – (Each One, Reach One)

Closing Prayer

The Serenity Prayer --Reinhold Niebuhr

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
Forever in the next.
Amen.