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SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

HOLY SPIRIT PARISH

ADMONISH SINNERS

FR. DWAYNE THOMAN

This sounds like we are advised to “tell others what to do.” Or it sounds like we are judging others. No one in our culture wants to be told what to do: we jealously guard our actions and opinions and rise to defend them. And our relativistic culture really doesn’t adhere to any standards of objective moral behavior. So this becomes a very difficult work of mercy to practice. Instead, we keep to ourselves and keep our mouth shut.

But “admonishing the sinner” is not “telling others what to do” and it is certainly not judging another’s intention or the moral state of their soul before God. It is simply naming certain acts or omissions as sinful. It is helping others to avoid situations that could be sinful. Hopefully, parents do this all the time. They are constantly vigilant about their children’s behavior: beginning at a very young age teaching a child about what is right and what is wrong. Parents teach their children about what behavior is acceptable and what is not. They watch who their children hang out with and the kinds of situations they might be invited to. Parents try to direct their children to good behavior and avoid occasions of sin. This is “admonishing” the sinner.

Indeed, it is a profound work of mercy to help others understand sinful behavior and to help them avoid occasions of sin. When we do that, we model the Divine Physician himself.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Children:

- 1) What do you do when you see someone do something wrong? What can you do to help that person do the right thing?
- 2) When a teacher or parent corrects you for doing something wrong, how do you take it? Do you listen and want to do better?

Youth:

- 1) How do you respond when an adult points out poor decisions you make or immoral behavior? Do you listen humbly and seek to do better or do you reject their advice?
- 2) When members of your peer group are involved in immoral behavior, how do you respond? How do your words and actions show you do not agree?

Adults/Families:

- 1) As suggested in the reflection, it seems to be very difficult in our culture to “admonish the sinner.” What approach do you think works?
- 2) Are you willing to take criticism for helping others to understand sinful behavior and avoid occasions of sin? Have a discussion in your household about how to create an atmosphere where each person will humbly listen to advice for correction and each person will positively point out areas for correction.

“If anyone among you should stray from the truth and someone bring him back, he should know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sin.” (James 5:19-20)



LET THE SAINTS BE YOUR GUIDE

ST. JOSEPH MUKASA BALIKUDEMBE

Balikuddembe was a 19-year-old page serving in the royal court in Kampala, the capital of modern day Uganda. Shortly after Catholic missionaries arrived in 1879, Balikuddembe became a catechumen and was baptized in 1882. When the king died, Mutesa II succeeded his father and promoted Balikuddembe putting him in charge of both the royal household and fellow pages. The king even gave Balikuddembe permission to correct him if he fell into error.

Balikuddembe started to do just that. A few months later the king wanted to execute an Anglican convert and Balikuddembe opposed him. The king stopped the execution. This happened again a few months later but the king did not listen to Balikuddembe. Instead the king summoned him to court and told him to keep his faith to himself or die. Balikuddembe chose death. His successor at court was Charles Lwanga who met a similar fate.

PRACTICING THIS WORK

- Acknowledge your own sin and need for forgiveness. Go to confession often. Recognizing our own sin and celebrating God’s forgiveness helps us to be credible guides for others.
- Remember Mt. 7:5: “Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from another’s eye.”
- Publicly talk about your own need for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and your experience of celebrating God’s mercy.
- When a friend or family member is making a series of harmful choices, intervene directly and even forcefully. Try to point out harmful choices and consequences. Offer them positive alternatives.
- Point out hypocrisy when you see it. Remind others of the Golden Rule, “Do unto to others what you would have them do unto you.”
- Guide others, especially children and youth, in how to make a sound moral decision. Give them the tools they need in doing this.
- Be a good example of Christian living. Do not participate in gossip. Do not brag about your immoral activities. Do not cause scandal by your words or actions.



**“BE ON YOUR GUARD! IF YOUR BROTHER (OR SISTER) SINS, REBUKE HIM (HER); AND IF HE/SHE REPENTS, FORGIVE.”
(LK 17:3)**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES CAN BE FOUND AT:

<https://youtu.be/U5XOQ0I91NY>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JW-SxdX3-u>