

GOSPEL PEARLS

Admonishing sinners

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Jesus said to his disciples: "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything

they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18: 15-20)

Jesus addresses the disciples by giving them general directives that are applicable at all times. They are called to continue their Master's mission. For this reason, when faced with someone who makes a mistake, Jesus first asks them to be merciful and to privately admonish those who have sinned. Admonishing sinners is, indeed, a work of spiritual mercy. If you do not admonish your fellow sinner you leave him or her in a condition from which they will not easily rise. Obviously, if sinners do not convert, it is necessary to protect the other members of the Church, starting with the youngest, most defenceless persons by publicly reaffirming the true teachings of Jesus and avoiding associating with those who publicly reject the teachings of the Gospel and the Church. When faced with a sinner, can you escape the two extreme temptations: to pridefully correct them or simply saying nothing?