

TWENTY THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (9/6-7/2008)

Ezekiel 33/7-9, Psalm 95, Romans 13/8-10, Matthew 18/15-20

As of this writing, both the Cubs and Sox are fighting for first place in their respective divisions.

Are we dreaming? Can you imagine what that might mean?

No, we disappointment-prone fans have to put it out of our minds and get back to reality.

Both teams – and any team worth its salt for that matter – are thriving because of teamwork.

Although an individual player on most sports teams can “carry” his team for a few games, he can’t do it for an entire season.

Even the great Michael Jordan needed Scottie Pippin and the other Bulls to be a winner.

Teamwork! Without it, it’s down the tubes.

In a manner of speaking, today’s Gospel puts a premium on teamwork, though for an altogether different purpose.

Jesus offers a practical solution for a tough scenario.

When communication breaks down between people, even brothers and sisters, and one thinks the other has done him wrong, Jesus offers some wisdom.

Go and talk it out first, which, of course, is just plain common sense.

If that doesn’t work, bring in a third party; if that doesn’t work, then bring the dispute to the church, the believing community.

If the perpetrator refuses to listen even to the church, then he is to be treated like a Gentile or a tax collector.

(Which always confuses me a bit since Jesus treated Gentiles and tax collectors with forgiving acceptance.)

The point is that we need each other, both for reconciliation and for good spiritual health.

We are in this Kingdom, in this salvation business together, and the Lord expects us to support, love and even confront one another when the time is appropriate.

Jesus takes it a step further when he says, *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”*

Teamwork, therefore, is not just a smart strategy to achieve our goals; it is the heart of what Jesus wants from all of us.

That's what "church" is all about.

People coming together to love the Lord and to love one another.

People helping one another when and where help is needed.

It all begins with the three persons of the Trinity; they are different and yet in complete loving relationship with one another

When the world was created by this Triune God, it was made in God's image and likeness.

Our whole lives, therefore, are modeled after the very nature of God.

God loves within Himself, God loves us, we love one another.

We began this essay commenting on the Cubs and Sox.

If either team wins (and we hope they both do –especially the Cubs), it won't be because of individual effort, as important as that is; it will be as a team, plain and simple.
