

Monday of the 23rd Week in Ordinary Time
September 10, 2012 8:30am

Saint Paul today is really angry with the community at Corinth. There is apparently an outrageous case of sexual immorality there and Paul, in his upset, calls them to condemn this sin in no uncertain terms and to expel from the community the persons involved.

Paul shows this kind of approach on one or two other occasions also.

The problem is that it does not fully square with Jesus' approach to similar matters in the gospels.

Jesus teaches right from wrong, good from evil.

But he never expels anyone; instead, he himself gets expelled.

And he never stops associating with anyone; instead, he associates with those whom others were condemning.

When we put Paul and Jesus together, I suggest several conclusions.

First, we do need to be clear about what we believe is right and wrong, good and evil.

We need to do this in matters of sexuality, the sacredness of human life, social justice, or in things as simple as telling the truth and not lying.

We need to be forthright about our moral belief and teaching.

Second, we are to judge actions or behaviors.

We are to say that infidelity in marriage is wrong or taking the life of the unborn is wrong.

We may judge these actions or behaviors, but we are not to judge persons.

We are not to say that so and so is a bad or evil person.

That is never ours to do.

Third, we are not to expel people from our community.

And we are not to make them feel unwelcome or unwanted.

Instead, we keep them connected with the community, we trust their sincerity, and we also trust that their being part of the community is the best way for them, as it is for us, to come more fully to the Lord and the Lord's way.

We are to trust both the Lord and the strength of the community enough to believe this.

This continued association with those with whom we disagree or with those whose behavior we do not approve was and is the way of Jesus.

As you can see, Saint Paul got me thinking.