

Father Rudy's Reflections  
Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time  
September 10, 2023

## There Is Another Way: Embracing Unity and Compassion

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

Several weeks ago in an otherwise quiet suburb on the west side of Cincinnati, amid the hustle and bustle of residents shopping for supplies for their children returning to school, a shot rang out in front of the area Target store. The initial police report described the scene as an altercation among three individuals that escalated and became violent. One man's hip was shattered by a gunshot wound, and for those of us who heard or read the news, our hearts were also shattered when considering this event. Because these scenes of carnage are being played out more and more in our communities, we must ask ourselves these questions: *What is happening to our society? Why are we settling everyday disagreements in the most disturbing ways? And, ultimately, where is our Christian compassion and unity as human beings?*

On this Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, in Matthew's Gospel, we consider Jesus's words about resolving conflicts within our community and the profound impact of gathering together in Christ's name to find peaceful outcomes.

Psychologists tell us our human nature is innately wired to make automatic judgments about others and their behaviors, so we do not have to spend an inordinate amount of time weaving through our daily lives trying to understand everything we see or hear. We tend to create a hierarchy of *better than* and *less than* and define everyone and everything within our own self-righteousness. According to Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, "Thinking is difficult, that is why most people judge." And it is true to say that in judging others we detest those things in others that are a true reflection of the things we cannot accept within ourselves. We lash out because we do not wait for explanations or the time it takes to understand context.

When we come together (when two or more are gathered in Christ's name), we must remember that our unity must be rooted in genuine compassion and understanding and not quarrelsome and menacing reverberations. Yes, conflicts do arise, but instead of being divided, we are called to follow the teachings of Jesus with gentleness and humility. We must always deal with others within a framework for reconciliation and approach others with an open heart.

In every difficult situation we face, we must, individually, try to craft a world that exemplifies the teachings of Jesus Christ, and in our relationships with other people, offer a beacon of hope and love in a world that so desperately needs it.

Yours in Christ,  
Father Rudy