

**23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle A
Gospel Reading: Matthew 18:15-20**



Don't Get Even!

Theme:	Resolving conflicts with our brothers and sisters in Christ.
Object:	<i>A simple balance scale and some stones of different sizes.</i>
Scripture:	"If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him -- work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend." Matthew 18:15

Look what I have. Do you know what this is? It is a balance scale. It is used to compare things to see which is heavier. If you can get items that weigh exactly the same, the two sides of the scale will be even.

Let me show you. (Put a stone in one of the cups and then the other using stones of different sizes.) Are the cups even? No, let's try putting another stone in this cup. Are they even now? No, now this side is too heavy. (Continue for a few minutes making sure that the two sides are never even.) It is really hard to get the two sides even, isn't it?

Has anyone ever said something that hurt your feelings? Sure they have!

Perhaps you were playing with a friend and he called you a name.

What did that make you want to do? Did it make you want to want to get even by calling your friend a name? Do you know what? That is just like trying to balance these scales -- you never get even! He calls you a name and so you call him a name. He doesn't like that so he calls you another name and on and on the name-calling goes. You never get even!

I have heard people say, **"Don't get mad; get even."** Think about the balance scale.

We saw how hard it is to get even, so here's a better idea, **"Don't get even; get ahead."**

How do you do that? Well, let me explain. ***In our Bible reading today, Jesus says, "If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him -- work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend."*** Now that's what I call "getting ahead." If we try to get even, we will lose a friend, but if we forgive someone, we will make a friend!

Jesus did not call us to be his disciples to make other people pay for their sins by hurting them back. Instead, he told us to do what he did -- love them and forgive them. Sometimes that is very hard to do, but we can do it if we ask Jesus to help us.

Father, when someone hurts us, give us a forgiving spirit to talk to them and try to resolve the conflict rather than to try get even by hurting them back. Help us to love and forgive others as you have loved and forgiven us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.