

23rd Sun OT – Matthew 18:15-20

Karen Clifton, of whom I'll mention more later, quotes Martin Luther King in her commentary on today's gospel from the book *Women Preach the Gospel*. We "...must see (or realize) that force begets force, hate begets hate, toughness begets toughness. And it is all a descending spiral, ultimately ending in destruction for all and everybody. Somebody must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate and the chain of evil in the universe. And you do that by love." I am sure that Martin Luther King came to that realization not only through the gospels but also by the example of Mahatma Gandhi.

Karen Clifton is the founding executive director of the Catholic Mobilizing Network or CMN. Her work against the death penalty began in 1996 in Houston, Texas, when her social justice and advocacy projects intersected with those of Sr. Helen Prejean, in a relationship that resulted in the 2008 formation of the above mentioned CMN in partnership with the Congregation of St. Joseph Sisters. And she adds that "This is the message of today's readings: a call to love, compassion, reconciliation, and restoration."

In today's gospel, Jesus lays down three stages on how to deal with the brother or sister who sins. The first is to follow the example of Jesus and Peter and deal with the matter in private. IF this fails, bring in two or three others. Only at the third stage is the whole community to be brought in. We can compare directions given in the Law in the book of Leviticus. The individual is given responsibility which is not shifted immediately to higher authority. If all fails, then the sinner is to be treated like gentile and a tax collector. We seem to have a formula for excommunication from the community.