

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison.

Matthew 5:25



In today's reading from the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus warns about anger, grudges and simmering feuds. The Jesus we meet here is a practical peacemaker. Rather than trying to resolve conflicts with acts of vengeance or through a shaky court system, he urges his followers to seek a peaceful resolution first, even if it literally means doing so on the way to court.

Biblical scholars frequently note that Jesus was speaking to a society obsessed with questions of honor and shame. While this is a sweeping generalization, it wasn't uncommon for insults to be "resolved" through acts of vengeance. More striking still is Jesus' portrayal of the

arbitrariness of a judge's decision and his sense that, whether a party is innocent or not, even the innocent may have to pay dearly. "Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny" (Matthew 5:26).

Jesus is seeking a culture change. He observes how his community keeps spiraling into violence and how a corrupt judicial system rarely achieves justice and instead urges peaceful ways forward. It is practical advice that still feels both radical and resonant today.

Today's readings

Psalm 130 | Ezekiel 18:21–28 | Matthew 5:20–26

Conflicts, large and small, happen all around us every day. How can we be peacemakers today?