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Joseph Matarazzo from the University of Oregon was in great demand as a psychotherapist, and contributed a great deal to the furtherance of this science. On one occasion, however, he is quoted as saying: 'more psychotherapy is accomplished between friends over cups of morning coffee than all day long in the doctor's office. He goes on to stress the vital importance of a good talk with a real friend, and he says that this is most helpful when things go wrong.

Even though this applies to problems shared between two friends, the same could apply to confronting anyone whose attitude or behaviour falls short of the norm. The monks used to call it fraternal correction. This is what the gospel is telling us today: 'If your brother or sister does something wrong, go and have it out with him or her alone between your two selves'. If we have a problem with someone's attitude, instead of nursing our resentment, why not find a suitable time and place to straight-talk it through. It goes without saying that the person who broaches difficult personal issues with others must also be humble enough to realise that they too have got feet of clay.

If the person dismisses out of hand what we have to say, then we might need to approach the situation more sensitively. Psychologists tell us that a person's ongoing bad attitude can often be indicative of a deeper unhappiness in their lives.

Pent-up antagonism towards anyone is like an underground river. It can suddenly erupt causing distress to the person concerned. We might rashly say things in these situations which might have been better left unsaid.

Jesus often had a word with people who needed to be brought to account. Last Sunday he didn't hesitate to compare Peter to Satan for suggesting He abandon the Cross and thereby his Father's will. He told off the money-changers in the Temple

precinct for publicly defrauding people on holy ground. He told Simon, the Pharisee who invited him for a meal that he lacked the common courtesies normally shown to guests compared to the so called sinful woman who washed his feet. He rebuked the Scribes for only cleaning the outside of the cup, leaving the inside unclean.

Some people can't accept correction or advice from anyone. That, however, shouldn't stop us from believing that, with the help of God, they may in time have a change of heart and see things in a different light. We must never write people off.

Most of us, if we're honest with ourselves, get defensive when people pull us up on certain matters. But the person broaching the subject may also feel a bit nervous. The fear of being affronted or having a friendship put at risk can keep us from being candid with the truth. But when bringing up difficult subjects we must do it with respect for the people involved.

Timely correction given and taken in the right spirit usually turns out to be a blessing in disguise. As scripture says: 'the hand that hurts is often hand that heals'