

Alleluia, alleluia! / God was in Christ, to reconcile the world to himself; / and the Good News of reconciliation he has entrusted to us. / Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 18:15-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

If your brother or sister listens to you, you will have won that person back.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector.

'I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.

'I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / A

10 SEPTEMBER 2023

CONCERN FOR OTHERS

From time to time, we hear family counsellors speaking of the need for 'tough love', the sort of love that expresses itself by dealing head-on with the problems we are tempted to ignore. Often, we would do anything to avoid the risk of upsetting the other person. Of course, we all know that the problems are there but how do you go about confronting them in a constructive way? The readings for today give us some useful and powerful orientations.

As the people of Israel set up sentries to warn of the impending invasion by the Babylonians, Ezekiel was reminded of his own moral obligations as a sentry. His role was to speak the hard words of warning that would cause his contemporaries to rethink their values and get their inner house in order.

Matthew's own community had a process for naming issues and correcting them that respects both the individual and the community. If there is a problem in the community, its resolution needs to start on an individual level. Later, if it is necessary, the problem can be dealt with at the group level.

Paul highlights the obligation we have to each other in mutual love. Whether we warn each other as Ezekiel was called to do or correct someone, as was necessary in Matthew's community, it must come from our concern and love for the person. As he knows all too well it is only love that will not cause our brother or sister harm.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Ezek 33:7-9

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel

If you have not warned the wicked man, then I will hold you responsible for his death.

The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows, 'Son of man, I have appointed you as sentry to the House of Israel. When you hear a word from my mouth, warn them in my name. If I say to a wicked man: Wicked wretch, you are to die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked man to renounce his ways, then he shall die for his sin, but I will hold you responsible for his death. If, however, you do warn a wicked man to renounce his ways and repent, and he does not repent, then he shall die for his sin, but you yourself will have saved your life.'

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 94:1-2, 6-9. R. v. 8

R. O that today you would listen to his voice!

Harden not your hearts.

1. Come, ring out our joy to the Lord; / hail the rock who saves us. / Let us come before him, giving thanks, / with songs let us hail the Lord. **R.**
2. Come in; let us bow and bend low; / let us kneel before the God who made us / for he is our God and we / the people who belong to his pasture, / the flock that is led by his hand. **R.**
3. O that today you would listen to his voice! / 'Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, / as on that day at Massah in the desert / when your fathers put me to the test; / when they tried me, though they saw my work.' **R.**



SECOND READING

Rom 13:8-10

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

Love is the fulfilment of the Law.

Avoid getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love. If you love your fellow men you have carried out your obligations. All the commandments: You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and so on, are summed up in this single command: You must love your neighbour as yourself. Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour; that is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments.

■ The word of the Lord.