

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

You are just, O Lord, and your Judgement is right;
treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, by whom we are redeemed and receive adoption,
look graciously upon your beloved sons and daughters,
that those who believe in Christ may receive true freedom and an everlasting inheritance.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 33:7-9

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.

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.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 94

Response:

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 the 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

Romans 13:8-10

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

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.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia
Your word is truth, O Lord,
consecrate us in the truth.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 18:15-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

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.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who give us the gift of true prayer and
of peace,
graciously grant that, through this offering,
we may do fitting homage to your divine
majesty
and, by partaking of the sacred mystery,
we may be faithfully united in mind and heart.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Like the deer that yearns for running streams,
so my soul is yearning for you, my God;
my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant that your faithful, O Lord,
whom you nourish and endow with life
through the food of your Word and heavenly
Sacrament,
may so benefit from your beloved Son's great
gifts
that we may merit an eternal share in his life.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

10 SEPTEMBER 2017

Sunday Message

23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • Season colour: Green • Psalter Week 3



HAVE YOU A MOMENT?

When something goes wrong in the local community, what is it that we as Christians should want to do?

The answer in today's gospel is that we should do all we can to restore the relationship which has been damaged between the individual concerned and the group which has been affected as a whole. Matthew tells us that we should behave as responsible adults: we should speak to the person concerned one to one. The purpose is to give the person an opportunity to admit their fault and to put things right. If the personal, individual approach does not work, then we should involve the wider community. The last resort is excommunication, treating the guilty party as a *pagan* or *tax-collector*.

The main point we might consider is that Matthew is talking about a *community matter*, not a personal one. It is up to the community to decide what to do. The power of binding and loosing is given to the group of disciples, not just to Peter. God will respect the decision of the group, because Jesus will be there as part of the process when two or three meet in his name to decide the matter. What we should be aiming at is to restore the relationship between the person and the church community: to excommunicate anyone should be the last resort.

This means that we all have our part to play in resolving disputes which involve our parish or diocesan community. In the Hebrew Bible, the purpose of a trial is to reconcile the parties: this means that the guilty person admits their fault and then the relationship can be restored or healed. Given the Jewish background to Matthew's community and gospel, that is what he has in mind in our reading today. ■

LEARN

In the Bible, the purpose of a trial is to reconcile the parties involved.

The purpose of such a legal proceeding is not to secure a conviction and punish the guilty party.

The wider group of disciples is given the power to decide on matters of church discipline: the power to bind and loose is not restricted to Peter alone.

The Petrine office of the Bishop of Rome is to be the centre of unity between all the local church communities.

DO

Is there someone in your church community who is behaving in a way that upsets others? What do you do about it? Gossip to other people? Report it to the parish priest and then feel that you have done your duty (and passed the buck)? Why not act like a responsible adult and explain to the person the effect their behaviour is having on others – they may be unaware of it themselves.

REFLECT

An unhealthy and unpleasant aspect of the Roman Catholic Church is the practice, and in some cases encouraging, of anonymous reporting of individuals to higher authorities rather than confronting the individual in question. For over one hundred years certain people have taken it upon themselves to decide whether a writer or liturgical celebrant is outside the bounds of what they consider orthodox Catholic opinion or practice and to write to the bishop or a Roman Curial body informing them, but without telling the person concerned. Sometimes this information is taken at face value and acted upon without what most people would consider due and fair process or natural justice.

Our Gospel passage today is telling us that within the Christian community any matter which affects the life of the disciples of Jesus should be dealt with in an open, what we would call nowadays transparent, way. The person should be informed of the charge against them and given the chance to either explain or apologise straightaway, but not ostracised from the community without being given the chance to do so.

The word used of such a person is *brother* (and so it also means *sister*). Matthew is saying that there is a real bond between members of the Church: if this bond is broken, it is like losing a member of the family. If we try to put it right, then the Lord promises to be with us. ■



SAY

Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.