



TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year A
September 10, 2017

Ezekiel 33:7-9
Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9
Romans 13:8-10
Matthew 18:15-20

Assembly

(An unlit candle and a Bible opened to this week's gospel rest on a cloth-covered table in the meeting place.)

Beginning Prayer

(The candle is lit. Members are invited to silently focus on God's presence. After a short time of reflection, members alternate reading the following prayer aloud.)

All: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

I: Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

All: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

II: Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
For he is our God,
and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

All: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

I: Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,
where your fathers tempted me;
they tested me though they had seen my works."

All: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

(Members join in singing, "Let There Be Peace On Earth" song number #525.)

LISTEN TO THE LORD

(The leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week. The scriptures are read aloud with a pause after each reading. After the gospel is read, the leader invites members to choose a few words from the gospel that touch them.)

The leader asks these two questions with a pause between them: "What does this gospel say to you?", "How does this gospel affect you in your life?" The community silently reflects on these questions. The leader invites members to share their thoughts about the Insights and Reflection Questions for the week in a single group or within smaller groups.)

Insights

When I was a child my Italian grandparents had a seasonal cottage by the shore in southern CT that was a great place to spend summers. They named it 'High Dive' and when they passed, it became my family's. The six cottages on our street were built close together which provided no privacy

¹ The songs suggested for each week may be found in **Today's Missal Music Issue 2017**. Copies of this booklet are available from Oregon Catholic Press, P.O. Box 18030, Portland, OR 97218-0030. Call toll free 1-800-LITURGY (548-8749) weekdays, 6 a.m. - 5 p.m., Pacific Time

so when the Irish neighbors with six children and my family of seven were there, it got pretty crazy.

Because our families were so different, they were never very close but after the kids were grown and moved away our parents learned to be friendly and courteous with each other. On one particular occasion, Jack, the father, was really angry about something and he finally shouted at my father, “I don’t need you”, with some other choice colorful words attached. While walking away my father paused, turned and called back to Jack, “But Jack, I need you!” He was really trying to say, that as neighbors we need each other to maintain harmony in our homes, neighborhoods and communities. Instead of getting angry back at Jack and escalating the argument, my father defused it by appealing to Jack’s need to be wanted and respected, maybe even loved. After that incident, the relationship between my parents and our neighbors improved and as the generations shifted to the younger members, the same cordiality and friendships have been maintained.

It can be so easy when we disagree or get into an altercation to escalate a situation by being angry or defensive instead of being tactful and allowing the person to let out their feelings, without taking offense. Most of us have seen arguments that started as relatively minor grow into something much worse, sometimes into an irreparable fracture that requires mediation or some type of intervention.

The book of Ephesians 4:26 tells us, “Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not leave room for the devil.”

As Jesus tells us in this week’s gospel, if your brother sins against you, start with going to him and telling him his fault between you and him alone. Communication and empathy can help us avoid being part of the problem rather than part of the solution in our everyday lives and in our communities. And when all else fails, ask yourself “What would Jesus expect me to do in this situation?”

Reflection Questions

- ◆ Have you ever been in a disagreement that escalated beyond repair? What was your role?
- ◆ Describe a time you were able to successfully diffuse a volatile situation.
- ◆ Do you ever regret how you handled a situation with a friend or loved one? How did you resolve it?

Suggestions for Action

- ◆ Go to your church and light candles for relationships you have lost. Ask God to open a path to heal those relationships.
- ◆ Write a list of all those you need to forgive. Visit with, call or write a letter to each one and open the dialogue to apologize for your part in the rift. Ask their forgiveness and tell them you forgive them.
- ◆ If a friend or loved one is angry or in pain try to open a conversation with them about what is really bothering them. Offer support by listening to them and giving constructive advice if they ask for it.

HEAR THE LORD

(After about fifteen minutes of sharing, the leader poses these questions: “How has the sharing from this session affected you?” “How will it change you this week?” The leader allows a moment for members to reflect before inviting them to share their thoughts. The leader reads a selection from the readings aloud. Following the reading, the leader poses these questions to the members: “What is Jesus saying to you?”, “What is your response?” The community pauses to reflect on these questions. A brief instrumental selection may be played during this time. After this time of reflection, the leader invites members to share what they hear Christ saying to them.)

Closing Prayer

(Members pray as follows.)

All: Lord, remove the anger in my heart
Allow me to release all negative emotions
Fill my soul with light and love
Help me see a situation through another's eyes
Give me words to speak in times of trouble
Let my stubbornness and pride dissipate
Remind me of alternative ways to respond to others
And teach me to be the person you would like me to be
Help me be an example of what a follower of Christ is.
May your will be done. Amen.

(Members exchange a sign of peace. The candle is extinguished.)