

## **Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time A - Let love triumph!**

September 6, 2026

Throughout the readings this Sunday, we are encouraged to “love one another” as faithful followers of Christ. Ezekiel tells us that we are responsible for each other and Paul’s letter to the Romans offers: “Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another.” In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus tells us to challenge each other on our behaviour and to pray, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them.”

The readings carry a very clear message concerning our responsibility towards the salvation of others within the community. No man is an island and in Christ we are all brothers and sisters and members of one family. Just as living in our own family, problems and conflicts involving relationship are inevitable. So, in our faith community, when we see those who are misbehaving, doing wrong and going astray, we need to speak out because failure to do so is to condone an evil practice. It is actually an act of unkindness. As God told Ezekiel that “you shall give them warning from me” because if Ezekiel didn’t do that as God’s prophet, he will be blamed. (Ezekiel 33:7-9) However, we all know correction is never easy and can be embarrassing as it may carry with it the risk of losing a long-established friendship. Normally, silence is golden but there are occasions when speaking out, if done with love, will be beneficial. Love is the one thing that cannot hurt our neighbour. If we have the ability to convey a genuine concern, a little honest talking can often clear the air and change the situation for the better. We have to remember that no one is perfect, so when we point out the faults of others, we should be prepared to hear about our own. As we can all give offence unwittingly, we should make it our business if we have a difference with anyone, to settle the matter and be reconciled. Harsh words and aggressive attitude have no place in a Christian community. Christ himself emphasized the importance of being reconciled with our brothers and sisters when he said: “If you are offering a gift at the altar and on the way find that your neighbour has something against you, first go and be reconciled with your neighbour and then come and offer your gift” (Matt 5:23-24). How many of us really take these words to heart?

St Paul (Rom 13:8-10) sees that loving our neighbour as ourselves is the fulfilling of the law because that is actually a quote from Leviticus, the quintessential Old Testament rule book. The gospel reading (Matt 18: 15-20) is ultimately about the church. It shows the twofold dimension of Christian life which balances the community (safeguarding church unity) and the personal (respecting individual conscience). It is encouraging to hear Jesus speak of the church as “two or three gathered” in his name. It reminds us that the church is not a structure or a hierarchy or a group of ministers but an entire community of the baptized gathered in the name of Jesus. Jesus shows us a gentle, step-by-step approach to address a brother or sister’s fault: speak to the person privately and frankly (“between you and him alone”). If that fails, take one or two witnesses along. Only as a last resort, bring the matter to the broader community. These steps are done with love as we are always taught, we are to hate the sin but always show love to the sinner. However, there is often the trap for us to gossip rather than to speak with love. Gossip creates walls and division, making it a plague worse than silence or misunderstanding. Jesus assures us that when we are united in love and prayer (“where two or three are gathered in my name”), He is truly present among us. Where Jesus is, there is love. Let love triumph!

“Lord, I can be so judgmental! Help me in this day not to condemn others so quickly. Let me remember your words to forgive and remember how you will forgive me. Sign me with your cross today. Let Mary, the mother of all self-surrender be with me today. Thank you. Give me your love and your grace and I’ll ask for nothing more.”

“Lord, make me a channel of your peace, where there is hatred let me sow your love; where there is injury your pardon Lord...”