



Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
† Sunday 10th September 2017

In England and Wales Cycle of Prayer:

For the spread of the Gospel, the harvest, education

Keynote: Our responsibility for one another in Christ

Prophet Ezekiel 33:7-9

The prophet is given the task of watchman – to guard the People of Israel. *'I have appointed you as sentry to the House of Israel... to warn the wicked to renounce their ways... but I shall hold you responsible.'* In our own day, we share that role of the prophet, for a prophet is truly one who speaks out on behalf of God. We have a duty not only to *'warn the wicked to renounce their ways and to repent,'* but also says God to the prophet, *'(if) you do not warn the wicked one to renounce his ways, then he shall die for his sin, but I will hold you responsible for his death.'* We too, have a responsibility to speak the truth when the opportunity presents itself.

Responsorial Psalm 94 [95] – A processional psalm calling us to praise God

Letter of Paul to the Romans 13:8-10

'Avoid getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love,' writes the apostle. Paul reminds the faithful of the Church in Rome that the law of the gospel is summed up in the duty of love. *'All the commandments:'* he says, *'you shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet... all are summed up in this single command: You must love your neighbour as yourself.'* For the apostle – so steeped in the ancient Jewish Law of his youth – love is now the norm of Christian conduct, and the total fulfilment of the Law of God. *'Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour,'* Paul concludes. We might do no better than try to keep this law of love in our own lives.

Gospel according to Matthew 18:15-20

Matthew presents us with a three-stage procedure for fraternal correction in cases of dispute or unacceptable behaviour. Jesus says, *'If your brother (sister) 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.'* As we all know, some disputes are not resolved so easily. In the second-stage, Jesus says, *'take one or two others along with you, the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge.'* In the end if the matter is still not settled, and the bad behaviour continues, then *'if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses even to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector.'* The latter classes were excluded from the community, and the statement shows that in the end, if someone refuses to behave in accord with the gospel, they are to suffer the quite drastic penalty of being excluded from the community – excommunicated – for the sake of the welfare and common good of the community.

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