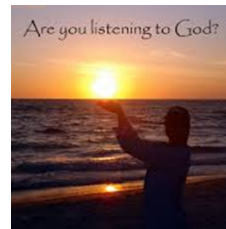




**AMDG**  
**23RD SUNDAY**  
**IN ORDINARY TIME**  
**YEAR A**  
**6TH SEPTEMBER 2020**



**'Listen to his voice!'**

OPENING PRAYER

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.

The theme of listening runs throughout today's readings: listening to the Divine Voice; to the voice of the prophet Ezekiel; to our community members; to the Church.

In the *First Reading*, God likens the prophet's role to that of a sentry, who has the task of warning people of approaching danger. Ezekiel must point out to the community both their sins and the consequences of them.

In the *Gospel*, Jesus advises us of our duty to do what we can when an individual's behaviour is a threat to the community. Our community does not live separately from God: the Lord is active and present in the decisions and desires of his people and our prayer and action should reflect this.

The *Psalms* picks up the theme of listening and bids the people to heed the message of God and to be receptive to his love and gifts.

Paul emphasises to the Romans that the precious freedom bought for us by Christ also brings with it a responsibility and a debt: to love and care for each other and to live out the consequences of our faith. These words go to the heart of the Gospel message. Jesus has shown us how to love our neighbour by everything he said and did. He also shows us how to be fully alive as a human being. (*Second Reading*)

Amidst the distractions and bustle of daily life, we pray to be alert for the quiet voice of the Divine, and to be generous in responding to it. We beg for the awareness of our responsibilities as a church community, especially to those most at risk across the world at this time.

## SECOND READING ROMANS 13: 8–10

**A**void getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love. If you love your fellow men and women 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 commandment: 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.

I take time to prepare for my prayer, pausing from the busy-ness of life.  
I ask the Holy Spirit to renew my awareness of God's presence about me and within me. As I inhale, I breathe in Divine Love. As I exhale, I breathe out God's love into the world. As I bathe in God's love, I settle into an expectant stillness.  
I read these sacred, yet practical, words of St Paul reflectively a couple of times, with an open mind and spirit.  
What do I notice? What speaks to my heart?  
I ponder ...

As I continue to meditate, I notice the summary of Christ's commandments, the core of his teaching.  
How does this resonate for me and my way of living?  
I mull this over, allowing God to guide my heart.  
Does God invite me to love my neighbours in fresh, additional ways?  
I linger here ... and ask to hear his quite, gentle voice.

*'You must love your neighbour as yourself.'*  
How do I love myself?  
What do I need from God today to enable me to love myself as he loves me?  
What do I need to see myself as God sees me ... to know myself as his beloved child, a loved sinner?

With a listening heart and body, I ask for the grace I need to love myself as God does, to enable me to love my neighbour.  
I am open to the voice of the Lord ...

When I am ready, I slowly end my prayer, perhaps telling the Father of my love for him.

*Our Father ...*

## GOSPEL MATTHEW 18: 15–20

**J**esus 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.’

As I prepare for my time of prayer with the Lord, I become aware of what lies in my heart and mind today. I pray for God’s gift of inner attention to him alone. I surrender myself to the power of the Holy Spirit through this prayer time and beyond, into my day.

Knowing there is no need to rush, I read the Gospel slowly, receptively.

Perhaps I imagine Jesus is speaking to me personally.

I pay attention ... relishing and drinking in the words I am hearing.

I ask God to guide my heart, allowing his words to resonate within my being.

I am silent, receptive ...

Reading the passage again, I notice what stirs within me.

Do I have a sense of being part of a Christian community ...?

... a sense of belonging to Christ when I pray with and for others ...?

Or maybe it has been difficult at this time to feel a sense of belonging to church? I take care not to judge.

I speak from the depth of my experience to the God who speaks to me.

In expectant stillness I listen for God, noticing how my heart or body are responding.

Perhaps God is inviting me to help with the work of building community in some way ... whether in church or elsewhere? I ask for any grace I need.

In time, I end my prayer slowly, praying for the gift of a deepening sense of belonging to the Body of Christ.

*Glory be ...*

## Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

Come, ring out our joy to the Lord;  
hail the rock who saves us.

*Psalm*

Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour:  
that is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments.

*Second Reading*

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

*Gospel Acclamation*

*This week's texts if you want to explore further:*

*Ezekiel 33: 7–9; Psalm 94 (95); Romans 13: 8–10 Matthew 18: 15–20*



If you love your fellow men and women,  
you have carried out your obligations.



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH  
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JESUIT  
Ministries



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