



# Celebrate

Sunday, September 10, 2023  
15th Sunday after Pentecost

*Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.*

## Prayer of the Day

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O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## First Reading

Ezekiel 33:7-11

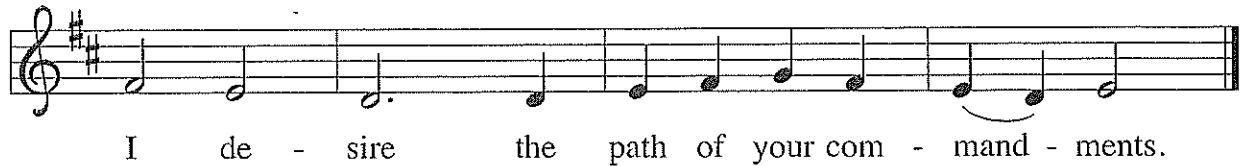
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*God appointed Ezekiel as a sentinel for the house of Israel. Ezekiel must faithfully convey God's warnings to the people. Remarkably, God—who is about to attack Jerusalem—gives a warning with the hope that repentance will make the attack unnecessary.*

So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup>If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. <sup>9</sup>But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways,

the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

<sup>10</sup>Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" <sup>11</sup>Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?



Teach me, O LORD, the way <sup>1</sup> of your statutes,  
and I shall keep it <sup>1</sup> to the end.

<sup>34</sup>**Give me understanding, and I shall <sup>1</sup> keep your teaching;  
I shall keep it with <sup>1</sup> all my heart.**

<sup>35</sup>Lead me in the path of <sup>1</sup> your commandments,  
for that is <sup>1</sup> my desire.

<sup>36</sup>**Incline my heart to <sup>1</sup> your decrees  
and not to <sup>1</sup> unjust gain. R**

<sup>37</sup>Turn my eyes from be- <sup>1</sup> holding falsehood;  
give me life <sup>1</sup> in your way.

<sup>38</sup>**Fulfill your promise <sup>1</sup> to your servant,  
which is for <sup>1</sup> those who fear you.**

<sup>39</sup>Turn away the reproach <sup>1</sup> that I dread,  
because your judg- <sup>1</sup> ments are good.

<sup>40</sup>**Behold, I long for <sup>1</sup> your commandments;  
by your righteousness en- <sup>1</sup> liven me. R**

*The obligation of Christians is to love one another and so fulfill the heart and goal of the law. Clothes make the person as we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and live today in light of the future God has in store for us.*

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

<sup>11</sup>Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for

you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; <sup>12</sup>the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; <sup>13</sup>let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>Instead put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

## Gospel

## Matthew 18:15-20

*Jesus offers practical advice to his disciples on how individuals—and the church as a whole—should go about restoring relationships when one member has sinned against another.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] “If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup>But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender

refuses to listen even to the church let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>Truly I tell you whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

## Prayers of Intercession

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*The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.*

Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

*A brief silence.*

Hold us accountable, O God. Show your church where repentance is needed and lead us in paths of intentional compassion and listening. Help us extend hands of reconciliation and care, especially in relationships with other Christians and people of other faiths. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Reveal your miracles to us, O God. Move us to cherish you as we behold the wonders of creation. Renew the seas and the soil, the forests and the creatures that live in them. Turn us to ways of living that seek Earth's thriving. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Inspire us to lead with honor, O God. Guide judges and legislators, police, and government officials to create and uphold just laws. Move us to treat all people with dignity and guide our conversations with one another. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

### Preparing for Next Week

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**Monday** Psalm 119:65-72. **Tuesday** Romans 13:1-7. **Wednesday** (commemoration of John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, died 407) Matthew 21:18-22. **Thursday** (Holy Cross Day) John 3:13-17. **Friday** Genesis 41:53—42:17. **Saturday** (commemoration of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, martyr, died around 258) Matthew 6:7-15. **Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost** (commemoration of Hildegard, Abbess of Bingen, died 1179) Genesis 50:15-21; Psalm 103:[1-7] 8-13; Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35.

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Help us comfort those who suffer, O God. Reassure any who are harmed by the wicked acts of others. Bring peace to all who are vulnerable, frightened, despairing, or sick (*especially*). Guard their waking and their sleeping. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Awaken us, O God. Challenge and encourage your people to value the vocation to which each is called. We pray for all discerning new possibilities or changing employment (*especially*). In all our diverse callings, teach us to love our neighbor above all else. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Be our hope, O God. We remember with thanksgiving your disciples who died in faith (*especially*). May their trust in your promise be our protection and our hope. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your compassion made known through Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**