

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) You are just, O Lord, and your judgement is right; treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 94)

ANTIPHON: O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts.

RESPONSE: O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts.

LECTOR: Come, ring out our joy to the Lord; hail the rock who saves us. Let us come before him, giving thanks, with songs let us hail the Lord. **R.**

LECTOR: Come in; let us bow and bend low; let us kneel before the God who made us for he is our God and we the people who belong to his pasture, the flock that is led by his hand. **R.**

LECTOR: O that today you would listen to his voice! "Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the desert when your fathers put me to the test; when they tried me, though they saw my work." **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! God was in Christ, to reconcile the world to himself; and the Good News of reconciliation he has entrusted to us. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is yearning for you, my God; my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.

Or

I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

TODAY'S READINGS Ezekiel 33:7-9; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20

NEXT WEEK (24th Sunday of Year A) Sirach 27:30-28:7; Ps 102; Roman 14:7-9; Matthew 18:21-35

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6 September 2026 23rd Sunday Year A

Living and working in a community – be it large or small – is not always easy. We all know that. It is “par for the course” that tensions, disagreements, and challenges arise and need to be handled for the sake of community well-being. But it is not easy. The early church communities were no exception. In this week’s gospel we glimpse one of the challenges that arose in the community for whom Matthew writes his gospel.

The challenging issue at hand is what to do with members of the community who are at fault or in error, perhaps living or behaving in ways that are contrary to Jesus’ teaching, perhaps causing divisions or confusion in the community, perhaps leading other members astray in their faith and practice, perhaps even causing harm to “little ones.” Sin is a reality in our human condition and in our communities. What to do? How to deal with it?

In the gospel reading, Jesus instructs his disciples on how to deal with sinful behaviour in the community.

On the one hand, followers of Jesus are to be compassionate, merciful and forgiving. But Jesus is clear: that does not mean that anything goes or that we are to turn a blind eye when members of the community behave in ways that are sinful. Not at all!

Jesus describes a disciplinary procedure for responsible fraternal correction of an erring member of the community. At first, the matter is to be treated with discretion and sensitivity,

and the one at fault addressed in a one-to-one meeting and their wrong doing addressed with them with a view to its correction.

If that approach does not lead the member to correct their misbehaviour, then assistance is to be sought from two or three other members of the community and the matter addressed again with the one in error.

Should these attempts prove futile, the recalcitrant person is to be brought before the community, and, if even this correction is rebuffed, the person is to be excluded – in other words, excommunicated – from the community.

Jesus says that they should then be treated “as a Gentile and a tax-collector,” in other words as an outsider, not a member of the community. But remember, Jesus had particular concern and compassion for the outsider. He reached out to outsiders; he befriended Gentiles and tax-collectors. It seems that Jesus means for the community to keep reaching out to the person in the hope that they will eventually see and correct their error, make amends, and re-enter the community.

Jesus doesn't promise it will be easy. It takes courage. But he assures his disciples, and us too, that he is always with us: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there with them.” It is a message he reiterates in his very last words in Matthew’s gospel: “Behold I am with you always” (Mt 28:20).

Anne Hunt

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