

Read

Ezekiel 33:7-9

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Romans 13:8-10

Matthew 18:15-20

LIVING THE WORD

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 6, 2020



REFLECTION

When someone sins, we are to help the sinner by letting them know that what they have done is harmful to their relationship with God and others. We are encouraged to be discreet at first—to keep it between us and them, initially. This makes sense because no one enjoys being called out by their friends in front of others. That sort of action can easily lead to gossip, feelings of shame, or the perception that someone is better than the other person. These are very tricky situations. However, Jesus reassures us that he is always with us when we confront others about sinful behaviors and that the community is also there to support us. It is important to address these issues so that your relationships will be strong and good. By holding each other accountable, we help one another follow Christ more closely.



ACTION

Before we can approach others about their sin, it is important for us to be aware of our own sin. This week, spend some time in prayer reading and reflecting on today's Gospel (Matthew 18:15-20) and Matthew 7:1-5. This second passage reminds us that we are all sinners. While it is important to help others who have sinned against us, it is just as important to recognize where we have failed and to ask God and others for forgiveness. How does this influence the way you approach others who have sinned against you?

Watch

*Kwame Christian's TEDxTalk,
"Finding Confidence in Conflict."*

[https://www.youtube.com
/watch?v=F6Zg65eK9XU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6Zg65eK9XU)



? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Have you ever been corrected in front of a group of people? How did you feel?
- ❖ How do you feel Jesus' presence whenever people gather in his name?



September 6, 2020

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #127A

Ezekiel 33:7-9

Psalms 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Romans 13:8-10

Matthew 18:15-20

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus offers advice to his disciples on how to solve problems and heal the pain that sometimes occurs in relationships. At times, we hold grudges and are loath to forgive another person. Sometimes, we like to stew in our anger. Jesus tells us that we are to approach the problem and person head-on, going straight to the source so that we can devise a solution and offer forgiveness. Sometimes, we need to enlist the help of others when solving problems. Jesus emphasizes the importance of community in this passage: where two or three are gathered, Jesus is present in their midst. We are reminded of this every time we come together to celebrate the liturgy or in smaller and simpler ways that Jesus is always with us.

Q FOCUS: *To confront others in a spirit of love and mercy by relying on Jesus' presence and the community of faith.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

We celebrate the memorial of St. Peter Claver on September 9. St. Peter Claver was a Spanish missionary to Cartagena in the seventeenth century. Claver remained in Cartagena for about forty years, until his death. During his time there, he focused his

ministry on helping the slaves that were being brought to the port city in large numbers. He helped to meet their basic needs by giving them food, water, and medicine when they came into port. He also ministered to them spiritually and showed them the abundant love and mercy of God. He is an example for us today of how someone can recognize Christ's presence in other people and act on that knowledge.

Church Teaching Connection

"To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of His minister, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,' but especially under the eucharistic elements. By his power he is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for he promised: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Mt 18:20)" (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, 7).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 18:15-20

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus said to his disciples: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again, amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

In this passage, Jesus offers his disciples some sage advice. If a family member, friend or another acquaintance hurts you, then Jesus informs his disciples and us that we are to discuss the situation with that person to try to solve the problem. This can be difficult for us, even though Jesus encourages us to do so. Sometimes, we want to stew about a problem and let it fester until we are very angry with someone else. At other times, we want to complain to our other friends

or to our parents about how so-and-so hurt our feelings. We do not always want to solve our problems with others immediately. Today's Gospel passage shows us that the right choice to make is to confront that person and sort out the problem together.

► **When someone hurts you, what do you usually do about it? Do you explode? Do you shut down? How might Jesus' advice help you with your relationships?**

Of course, Jesus recognizes that sometimes the other person will not want to listen to you or will not want to solve the problem between the two of you. In this case, Jesus encourages us to enlist the help of others to help work out the problem as well. As the adage goes, "Two heads are better than one." We often need the help of others we trust and depend on to sort through difficult relationships and experiences. One of the most beautiful gifts of our faith is the importance and emphasis on community. We must always remember that we are never alone. Relying on others is essential in our faith journey, and Jesus reminds his disciples that being reliant on others can help heal wounds and solve problems as well.

► **Who do you turn to when you need help solving difficult problems?**

► **What communities are you a part of?**

The notion of community continues in the passage when Jesus reminds his disciples that God is present when people come together in the name of Christ. Jesus is present each time we gather together in his name, no matter where we are, be it at home, in school, on the bus—the possibilities are endless! Sometimes we think that we must be doing extraordinary things to experience Jesus in our midst, but Jesus reminds us that he is present in our simple everyday experiences as well. If we look closely at the Gospel accounts, we see that Jesus meets people where they are, from fishing (Matthew 4:18-22) to climbing a tree (Luke 19:1-10). Jesus also meets us where we are in our process of forgiveness, with ourselves and with others. Even when we confront others by ourselves, we bring with us the knowledge of Jesus' love and mercy. The Holy Spirit is present in our lives, guiding our words and actions.

► Have you felt the presence of Christ when you were gathered with family, friends and/or your parish community? When and where?

► Have you felt the Holy Spirit's presence when you face confrontation? How did it help?

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 22.

Sometimes, we are forced to confront someone who has wronged us, and this can be extremely difficult at times.

Community is essential to our lives as Christians.

When have you felt the presence of Christ when gathered with others?

Act on the Word

Gathered in Jesus' Name

You will need to have a recording of the song "Gather in Your Name" by Lori True available and a copy of the lyrics so everyone can see them. If teens use journals in your sessions, those should be available as well, or have sheets of paper for the young people to write reflections on.

Invite the teens to close their eyes and listen to the song once, without looking at the lyrics. Discuss what words they heard in the song and what struck them in the song. Play the song again, and this time, give each person a copy of the lyrics so that they can

follow along. Invite them to join in the chorus as well, if they would like. After listening to the song and reading along with the lyrics, discuss again what images or words spoke to the them. Ask the teens why they think that you decided to use this song in today's lesson.

Once the discussion is finished, invite the students to journal about the song, the feelings that they felt when listening to it, and what images emerged for them. Prompt them to include ways in which they have felt the presence of Christ when gathered in community with family, friends, their parish community, or in other experiences. Emphasize that no matter what kind of gathering is taking place, Christ is present with them.

Conclude the session by listening to the song one more time. Encourage the students to sing along.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

*you have taught us to be gentle with each other,
loving and forgiving each other.*

*May our families and our parishes be on in love,
and may we know your presence in our midst
whenever we gather for prayer.*

You live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.