

Our Household Church: I am among you!

23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

WE GATHER AS PRAYER:

All: In the Name of the Father. In the Name of the Son. In the Name of the Holy Spirit! We Begin!

All: Creator, people gather in homes whether in apartments, mobile-home courts, houses or hotel rooms as well as camping and some are home-less. Some live with others. Some live alone. Some are long term residents as well as travelers, pilgrims and recent arrivals. Yet, each one takes time to praise and thank You for life and struggle; for hope and forgiveness! We know You listen to us! Help us listen to one another!

Men: You encourage us to grow generous hearts **All:** just as You, in Creation, are generous with us!

Women: Being rich in mercy, You constantly offer pardon. **All:** You call us to trust in Your forgiveness.

You call us to forgive as You forgive us. If You continue to forgive us, who are we to hold back forgiveness?

Eldest: Creator, you never turned away from Your people, even though so often Your covenant was broken,

Women: You continue to bind the human family to Yourself through Jesus your Son, our Redeemer,

Men: with a new bond of love so tight that it can never be undone.

Eldest: Today, again You call us, Your people, to a time of grace and reconciliation.

All: As we turn to You in spirit, this day, fill us with hope in Christ Jesus. Sow in us the desire to be of service to everyone. Fill us, and the people we serve, with the same Holy Spirit, opening our eyes to see and hear You.

WE READ, LISTEN and SHARE:

For today's complete Readings [click here](#). Each of the Readings, [Ezekial 33:7-9](#) (Ezeiel means "God Strengthens") and [Romans 13:8-10](#) can be read or simply read the Gospel [Matthew 18:15-20](#).

While someone reads the Scripture(s), listen well. BE AWARE OF THE IMAGE BEING PAINTED, OR THE STORY BEING TOLD. DOES THE STORY OR THE IMAGE CALL TO MIND ANYTHING SIMILAR IN YOUR OWN LIFE EXPERIENCE? After the reading, share your impressions of the reading(s):

Forgiveness (to "give completely," "remit a debt") is central to today's Gospel, as well as in the short texts from Ezekiel and Paul's letter to the Romans. More than Forgiveness, today's texts recall us to be mindful of the reality (tradition) of Corporate Responsibility (ability to respond) for actions taken. Engagement toward change is not just the responsibility of the "offender" – who somehow is blind to the way of justice and right. The responsibility of forgiveness ("continue to choose to 'care' and to 'give'") by the offended individual and the community is central: lest we fall into the "false way" of divisiveness which breaks us apart and distances us from one another. We, as "Western people," in general have little or no concept of corporate evil, or we are actively set against the idea. It is important for us to see something and to say "Look, that's wrong." But we especially need to be able to say, "How do I work to change 'it'?"

✓ *Tell a story of someone who had a disagreement with someone else which caused a real rift in their relationship.*

- *What do you perceive to have been the actual "rift"? Any ego involved on either part?*
- *If there was a "reconciliation," how did it come about?*

Ezekiel writes, "I have appointed you watchman. Try to turn [them] from [a divisive] way, [and] you shall save yourself."

✓ *Cardinal Bernardin, in Chicago, used to try to get people of opposing ideas and opinions, racial groups who were mutually suspicious as well as people with political divisions– including Pro-Life and Pro-Choice! He invited the opposing groups to come and sit and talk. "What do you have in common?", was always his question. He worked with the groups until they took down their barriers and discovered a point upon which they could build a common goal.*

✓ *When you have been at odds with someone about anything, and tension was building: how did the tension diminish? How was it defused? What “process” worked for you (plural) in your resolution?*

Paul wrote in Romans: “Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.”

✓ *To begin to separate from one another, we often begin to diminish the humanity of the other. Using pronouns, adjectives and epithets when talking about the other becomes commonplace. If I were living: “Love does no evil to the neighbor?”, how would that influence my manner of thought and speech about the one with whom I was arguing?*

Matthew writes: “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone...whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven...Where two or three are gathered together..., there am I...”

✓ *Since the “Law” (which in Christ is Relational – but one family) calls us “to choose to continue to give” and “to love my neighbor as myself”: What is my responsibility in action to change hearts? Whose heart first?*

WE BREAK BREAD IN UNITY AND HOPE:

Women: We gather (*together and at a distance*) to re-member how Jesus, your Son, tied us to the Jewish Passover of Freedom – sharing bread and (*wine/water or a meal*)! As your Christ, Jesus shows us how to live beyond Fear and in the Way to Peace. We share this bread broken apart and healed in us: **All:** We Thank You: (*pass some form of bread (a loaf, pita, tortilla, chapati or a meal) with each person breaking off a piece.*)

Men: Confronting Death – what greater Fear is there? – and he shed his blood on the cross washing away our sins. Jesus, who was broken, becomes our healing. His compassion flows in us and through us to the world:

All: We Thank You:

(pass a pitcher of wine, water, juice, etc. to each person. After everyone has poured their glass/cup, pray together [repeating after a leader if there are small children present]):

All: Rising from the dead, Christ frees us of the fear of the deaths of our lives. **All:** We Thank You.

Elders: Jesus Your Christ teaches the Way of Peace, calling us to transform the world in which we live.

Women: The Peace we bear and share in Jesus, Your Christ, leads us to reconcile our World to You.

All: We Thank You!

Youngest: Creator God, as we long to participate in the Bread and Cup of the parish community

All: gather us: healing the divisions of fear and closed hearts in the world around us.

Elders: We gather as a Household Church, both present and remote, and know our communion of mind and heart. We pray then as a church: (*take turns praying these petitions*)

- May the communion of our Domestic Church calm our fears and comfort the dis-ease among us.
- (*mention specific fears or concerns for which comfort and hope are sought*)
- Guide the leadership of (*name of parish/chapel/mission/community*), both lay and ordained, as they continue to discern how best to re-gather us.
- Inspire our bishop (*name*) with pastoral balance and attentive wisdom.
- Continue to enable Pope Francis with the vision of healing the Universal Church into the future.
- Empower the leadership of other Faith and Religious communities as they seek, as well, a way through the shadows of distancing for their congregations.
- May Health Care Workers and First Responders we know (*names*), be safe! Calm their fears!
- For relief to families struggling to meet the needs of food and finances. May those who have been able to share.
- Give comfort to families and friends who know people who have died during this time.
- (*other prayers*)

All: Our Father, who art in heaven... **All:** Let us be Peace!

In the Name of the Father. In the Name of the Son. In the Name of the Holy Spirit! We move on!