

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

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

*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*

Let us learn to live with kindness, to love everyone, even when they do not love us.' *Pope Francis*

Lord our God,  
in you justice and mercy meet.  
With unparalleled love you have saved us from death  
and drawn us into the circle of your life.  
Open our eyes to the wonders this life sets before us,  
that we may serve you free from fear  
and address you as God our Father.

*Old Opening Prayer*

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:  
Ezekiel 33: 7-9; Psalm 94 (95); Romans 13: 8-10 Matthew 18: 15-20



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Jesuit Community, Harborne

'If your  
brother or  
sister does  
something  
wrong ...'

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**ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM**



Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Year A, 10th September 2023

'You must love your neighbour  
as yourself'

The theme of listening runs through today's readings. We are to listen to the word of God, to our hearts, to one another, and to our community. We are challenged truly to love one another, speaking out where necessary. Just as Jesus became our brother and made himself responsible for us, he asks that we do the same.

God appoints Ezekiel as his sentry: a mouthpiece to sound a warning when danger appears. We, too, are to be on the look out, helping one another rather than simply looking on. (**First Reading**)

The **Gospel** echoes this. Jesus tells us what to do when things go wrong in relationships within a community. We should try to work things out one-to-one, then invite those we can trust to advise, and finally ask the community, bringing back those who stray. Jesus asks us not to give up on people, even when they do not listen to us.

In the **Second Reading** St Paul emphasizes that it is love that underpins all our relationships. The ten commandments are summed up in the phrase 'love your neighbour as yourself'.

The **Psalm** of praise urges us to listen to the Lord with open hearts.

Today we also celebrate the first Sunday in the season of creation. As we embrace the beauty of God's Kingdom, we pray for the grace to be good neighbours to each other and to the whole of creation, restoring and caring for all that God has made.



### 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.

## 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 come to my quiet place and begin to become still, slowing down any chatter in my mind.

I consciously place myself in God's presence and take a few deep breaths.

I breath in God's love for me and breath out God's love into the world.

How am I today? However I feel, I trust in the Lord's infinite love for me.

I am in his care. I ask the Holy Spirit to guide my prayer.

I take as long as I need to settle .... there is no rush.

When ready, I read the passage through slowly, two or three times.

What am I noticing? What words or phrases resonate for me?

Perhaps I am drawn to '*commandments*' ... '*yourself*' ... '*neighbour*' ... '*debt of mutual love*' ... '*obligations*' ... or something else?

Why is this touching my heart? How is it speaking to me?

I mull it over, and speak to the Lord freely about it.

Pausing, I listen quietly for whatever he may say to me.

Maybe I ponder how I 'love myself'.

God knows my strengths and weaknesses, and loves me just as I am, his loved and forgiven child. What do I need from God to love myself in this same way?

*'Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour'*.

Is God asking me to love my neighbours in more varied ways?

I reflect on how I might be a channel for God's love in this world.

What grace do I need from God to enable me to do this?

When ready, I give thanks for this time, and close my prayer slowly.

Perhaps I tell my Lord God of my love for him.

*Glory be ...*

## 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.'

I become still, aware of God's presence with and within me. I entrust anything that may be distracting me to the Lord's safe keeping.

I pray for an open heart and mind, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I read the text slowly and prayerfully. I may like to imagine Jesus speaking these words to me personally. What am I hearing? What am I seeing? How do I feel? ... challenged, unsettled, comforted ...?

As I ponder Jesus's words, I may reflect on how Jesus himself behaved towards tax collectors like Matthew. I think of my own relationships. Do I always act with love, concern and understanding?

How comfortable am I in speaking out when it's obvious someone is doing something wrong?

How easy do I find it to clear matters up and set things right, to encourage reconciliation ... with others, with myself?

As I re-read the passage carefully, I notice what stirs within me.

I may like to ponder my own community ... those I pray with, spend time with. I give thanks for those times when I experience the sense of togetherness, support, and belonging, with Christ at the centre.

I speak to the Lord about anything that has arisen from my prayer, and ask for any grace I need.

When ready, and with gratitude, I slowly end, praying 'Our Father'.