

## **MATTHEW 18:15-20**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your brother or sister does something wrong, go and have it out with them alone, between your two selves. If they listen to you, you have won them back. If they do 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 they refuse to listen to these, report it to the community; and if they refuse to listen to the community, treat them 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.'

**COMMENTARY: On the surface of this reading, there is just no way we could be bothered taking the first paragraph seriously. To do this, we must include the divine. Only God can cause repentance and those attempting to bring others into line must ensure they are acting in the name of God and are aware of the divine working within the soul of the sinner. Needless to say, everything to be done lovingly.**

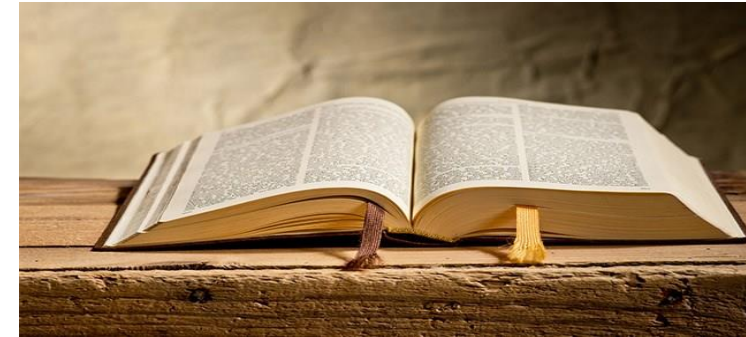
**We have examples in history of great saints converted because of the prayers of others. If the divine has caused the conversion it follows that this is how heaven will see it.**

**In the final paragraph we can see the power of unity and the power of including God in all that we do. The question to ask is 'how seriously do we act in this way?'**

# **Liturgy of The Word**

**23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**10<sup>th</sup> September, 2023**



**If today you hear his voice!  
Harden not your hearts.**

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.

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.

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.'

### **EZEKIEL 33:7-9**

The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows: ‘Son of man, I have appointed you as sentry to the House of Israel. When you hear a word from my mouth, warn them in my name. If I say to a wicked man: Wicked wretch, you are to die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked man to renounce his ways, then he shall die for his sin, but I will hold you responsible for his death. If, however, you do warn a wicked man to renounce his ways and repent, and he does not repent, then he shall die for his sin, but you yourself will have saved your life.’

**COMMENTARY:** This reading on its own, out of the context of the rest of the book, is difficult to understand. Ezekiel is chosen to succeed Jeremiah. His ministry is among God’s people who had been exiled to Babylon. He sees beyond the tragedies of his own time to when God will put a new heart and a new spirit into his people. We can say that he was a visionary and his teaching is centred on inner conversion.

Ezekiel is a prophet who has decided to speak up when he sees so much evil around him. Notice the last sentence in the text.

Today, we may feel much the same with the Church, particularly the Church of the West. A question we could discuss is ‘are we too silent when we see many, happy to just be on the fringes of the Church? They may ask for baptism etc, enrol their children in our schools, yet rarely attend Sunday Mass?’ What do you think would happen if we took that stance of saying something publicly?

### **ROMANS 13:8-10**

Avoid getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love. If you love your brothers and sisters 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 command: 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.

**COMMENTARY:** The word ‘love’ gets thrown about so loosely today, that it is hard to convey its real meaning. What it doesn’t mean is loving only those who love you, or, whom you get on with!

One way of explaining what St Paul means is to examine the Maori word ‘aroha’. We have words for compassion, empathy, sympathy, affection, kindness, charity, apology, grief, but in Maori we can simply use the word ‘aroha’. The context of its use will explain the meaning.

St Ignatius of Loyola says that love is proven by deeds rather than words. It is difficult to dispute that. The Judaic/Christian concept contains the challenge to love as you might love yourself. In order to obey this, we need to accept how we are created out of love and then ‘love ourselves’.