

Living the Word: Ezekiel 33.7-9

Ezekiel, the former Temple priest, lived in a challenging time. He was deported in 597BC to Babylon, which is where he had his series of visions. Here Ezekiel experiences the demanding divine request to serve as the watchman or sentinel over the Israelites, which means he has to warn them of impending disaster when they turn away from God. Quite often people don't want to listen to such messages and it is tempting not to want to deliver the warning. But it is made clear that Ezekiel must be willing to condemn all wickedness, so there is a chance for repentance. If people do not repent they will have to live with the consequences and so will those who knowingly stayed silent in the face of wrongdoing. This is a challenging passage for all of us who believe in the way of Christ, since it challenges us to stand up and be counted, even when we fear hostility and being marginalised for doing so.

O Sing unto the Lord

Many great missionary hymns came to be as a result of the 19th century Catholic Revival movement, often with wonderful use of militaristic imagery. *Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim* was written by George Kitchin (1827-1912) and Michael Newbolt (1874-1956) for a Festival of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, held in Winchester Cathedral (where Kitchin was Dean) in June 1887. The particular emphasis on the cross as a 'sign' recalls the story of the Emperor Constantine's vision and the words 'In hoc signo vinces' ('in this sign thou shalt conquer') which is also the motto of The Society of the Holy Cross (SCC) founded in London in 1855 by a small group of Anglo-Catholic priests led by Father Charles Lowder of St Peter's London Docks. Their hymn is always associated with the tune *Crucifer* by Sir Sydney Nicholson, who was founder of the School of English Church Music. This later became the Royal School of Church Music, to which many of our church choirs are affiliated.

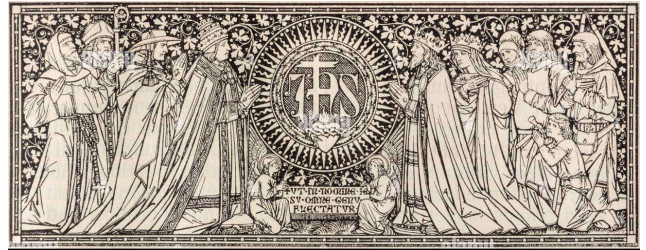
Prayers to Remember: 14th September.

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Almighty God, whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ was lifted high upon the Cross that he might draw the whole world unto himself: mercifully grant that we, who glory in the mystery of our redemption, may have grace to take up our cross and follow him; who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

10th September 2023

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity
Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary
Time



In today's Gospel the Lord gives direction to us – and the whole Church – about how to address an errant brother or sister. If one is wronged by another within the household and family of the Church, how does one address the issue? The Lord's direction is clear, the issue must be addressed directly and honestly: 'have it out with him alone, between yourselves'. Courageous honesty is encouraged, but privately, discreetly. If this does not succeed, then the Church is to be involved, but again, modestly so: 'take one or two brothers along with you', says the Lord. Only when that fails to effect repentance in the wrongdoer, is the person to be 'reported to the community', the body which has the ultimate sanction of excommunication: 'treat him like a pagan or a tax collector'. The Lord's direction in today's Gospel stresses how at every stage in this process rumour, sniping, gossip, scapegoating is to be avoided at all costs in the Church. These things should never be given opportunity among the disciples of Jesus Christ. Notice the stress the Lord places on honesty (the issue must be tackled as speaking truth is essential, even when difficult or even dangerous); on perseverance (try, try, and try again to effect reconciliation where there is estrangement); and discretion (only when it is absolutely necessary is the wider body of the Church and its authority to be invoked). The Lord in this passage places both the wronged and the wrong-doer at the centre. Both are to be treated equally and with deep care; their reconciliation is to be earnestly sought. Members of Christ's Mystical Body, whose law is love, should act in no other way.

Today's Gospel: St. Matthew 18: 15-20