



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD Twenty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time

Love does no wrong to a
neighbour; therefore, love is the
fulfilling of the law.

ROMANS 13:10

Overview

CLoW leaders are encouraged to exercise caution when using the readings for the Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A, as they remind us that Christian love entails responsibility for the truth. However, parents have the primary responsibility for catechizing their children. They are their children's first teachers and witnesses of faith, especially through prayer, example, and daily Christian living. Exercise prudence this week as the parish, priests, catechists, and CLoW leaders support and assist parents, but do not replace them.

The Lord charges the prophet Ezekiel with the responsibility of a sentinel, which is someone who must warn others when danger threatens. Silence in the face of serious error can allow harm to continue, while a truthful warning may help someone turn back.

This applies today when false or misleading information endangers people, damages reputations, or undermines the common good. Christians should not knowingly repeat misinformation. The Church teaches that every person has a duty to seek truth, adhere to it, and live accordingly.

Saint Paul gives the essential motive: "Love does no wrong to a neighbour." Correcting misinformation is not meant to humiliate, win an argument, or attack someone else. It should protect the person harmed and serve the truth.

Jesus gives a practical method: speak first privately and directly; involve others only if necessary; and seek restoration rather than public disgrace.

Before sharing or correcting information, a Catholic should: Verify the facts rather than rely on suspicion or emotion. Distinguish certainty from opinion and admit when something is unknown. Correct the false claim clearly, without exaggeration. Protect the dignity and reputation of persons, avoiding gossip, detraction, and calumny. Repair harm if false information has already been shared.

The Church teaches that truthfulness requires both honesty and discretion. A Catholic corrects misinformation—not harshly, but as a servant of truth and neighbourly love.

Readings

First Reading

Ezekiel 33.7-9

A reading from the book of the Prophet Ezekiel.

Thus says the Lord:

So you, O son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.

If I say to the wicked, "O wicked one, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand.

But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

The word of the Lord.

Observe a period of silence after the reading.

R. O that today you would listen to the voice of the Lord.
Do not harden your hearts.

O come, let us sing to the Lord ;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

O that today you would listen to his voice!
Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
when your ancestors tested me,
and put me to the proof,
though they had seen my work.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Brothers and sisters:

Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbour as yourself."

Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

The word of the Lord.

Observe a period of silence after the reading.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus spoke to his disciples. "If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If he or she listens to you, you have regained your brother or sister.

But if the person does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the Church; and if that person refuses to listen even to the Church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Background

Ezekiel 33:7–9 Ezekiel acts as a watchman for Israel, warning the people about their wrongdoing. His role is to alert them, not to condemn; if he remains silent, he shares in their responsibility. If they ignore his warnings, their guilt is on them. This passage emphasizes that fraternal correction, rooted in God's word, is an act of love aimed at guiding sinners toward conversion and life, laying the groundwork for the Gospel's teaching on correcting fellow Christians.

Psalms 95 is a call to worship the Lord as Creator, King, and Shepherd. As "the people of his pasture," we are expected to listen to God's voice. The warning against hardening one's heart highlights the importance of humility and of being ready to hear and obey God before guiding others.

Romans 13:8–10 Saint Paul highlights that love is the Christian's primary duty: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another." Love fulfills the moral law by preventing harm, as seen in the commandments against key sins. This love seeks the true good of others and is endless, drawing from God's love. Correction should be rooted in charity and aim for restoration rather than humiliation.

Matthew 18:15–20 Jesus outlines a gradual approach for addressing sin in the Christian community. The offended person first speaks privately to the offender. If that fails, one or two others are involved, and only then is the church approached. This process maintains the dignity of individuals and aims to foster reconciliation. The goal is to "regain that one," emphasizing that Christian correction is meant to heal rather than punish.

The authority to "bind" and "loose" highlights the Church's role in making authoritative judgments about communion and discipline. Jesus assures the Church of his presence: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." This underscores that the community's search for truth and reconciliation is guided by Christ's presence.

These readings urge Christians to be watchful yet non-judgmental, truthful without harshness, and loving without indifference. God's people should heed His voice, accept correction, and seek the conversion of others. Genuine ecclesial correction reflects the commandment that "love does no wrong to a neighbour."

Key Messages for Children

- † Listen to God and choose what is right.
- † Speak kindly when someone does wrong.
- † Love your neighbour through your actions.

Key Messages for Leaders

- † Help children encounter God's love.
- † Teach correction as an act of charity.
- † We are accountable to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- † Jesus' teaching about speaking privately does not mean a child must face any conflict alone without the safety of adult assistance.

Leader's Personal Reflection Questions

1. How faithfully do I prepare and proclaim God's Word so that the children connect it with their lives?
2. Do my words and actions reflect Christ's patient love and lead them toward reconciliation?

Takeaway

- ✓ Show Jesus' love by listening carefully and speaking kindly.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

At the proper moment, the priest invites the children to come forward. The leaders may come forward and stand facing the altar with the children. The priest then addresses the children.

Dear children, today, Jesus teaches us what to do when someone hurts us or makes a wrong choice. He asks us to speak truthfully and kindly, to listen, and to work for peace.

We will welcome you back soon.

Once most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the celebration site. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the CLoW space, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome

The leaders help the children sit and prepare. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Let us quiet our hearts and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

(Silence for a few seconds.)

Loving God, you gather us as your family. Open our ears to hear your voice and soften our hearts to receive your Word. Give us courage to speak with kindness, humility to listen, and love to make peace. May Jesus be present among us as we pray together. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, at a minimum, proclaim the Gospel.

READINGS FOR CHILDREN

A reader proclaims the approved text below. The intent is to allow the children to listen to the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at least the Gospel, then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all the reading.

A reader must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children.

First Reading

Ezekiel 33.7-9

The Lord said to Ezekiel: I have made you a watchman to help the people. Listen to me and then warn them for me.

Warn the evil people that they must do what God says and stop sinning. If you do not warn them, you are responsible.

But if you warn them to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, they will die because of their sins, but you will have saved your life.

Child-Friendly explanation

God asks Ezekiel to be a watchman for the people. A watchman notices danger and warns others. God wants us to care enough to help someone who may be making a bad choice. We do this gently—not to embarrass or punish, but to protect and help them.

Leader: If today you hear God's voice, harden not your heart.

Children: If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

Leader: Let us sing joyfully to the Lord; let us thank the God who saves us.

Children: If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

Leader: Come, let us bow down in worship before the Lord who made us.

Children: If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

Leader: The Lord is our God. We are God's people, the flock that God guides.

Children: If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

Children:

Love one another. If you love others, you have done all that the Law demands.

The law has many commandments, such as: Be faithful in marriage. Do not murder; Do not steal; Do not want what belongs to others. All the commandments are summed up as "Love your neighbour as yourself."

Love is all that the Law demands.

Child-friendly explanation:

Saint Paul tells us that God's commandments can be summed up in one great rule: love your neighbour as yourself. Real love does not harm another person. Love guides the way we speak, listen, forgive, and make peace.

Jesus spoke to his disciples. "If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If he or she listens to you, you have won back your brother or sister.

But if the person does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the Church. Anyone who refuses to listen to the Church, and if that person refuses to listen even to the Church, must be treated as an unbeliever or a tax collector.

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Child-friendly explanation:

What Jesus Teaches

Go to the person privately. Speak calmly and kindly.

Tell the truth about what happened and listen to the other person.

If the problem is not solved, ask a trusted adult to help.

Keep working for peace. The goal is to restore friendship, not to win.

Pray together, because Jesus promises to be with those gathered in his name.

Tell the children clearly:

If someone hurts you, frightens you, asks you to keep an unsafe secret, or makes you feel unsafe, go immediately to a trusted parent or adult. Jesus' teaching about speaking privately does not mean a child must face an unsafe person alone.

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions.

Important Information for CLoW leaders at the appropriate time:

Please remember to reinforce with the children:

If someone hurts you, frightens you, asks you to keep an unsafe secret, or makes you feel unsafe, go immediately to a trusted parent or adult. Jesus' teaching about speaking privately does not mean a child must face an unsafe person alone.

What did you hear?

How would you feel if someone corrected you in front of everyone?

Why is speaking privately kinder?

What words could you use instead of shouting or blaming?

Who are trusted adults who can help when a problem is serious or unsafe?

What does it mean to listen with an open heart?

Where is Jesus when we gather and pray in his name?

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray to the Lord.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

The leader says:

Leader:

Jesus invites us to follow him and choose what is loving and right. Trusting that God hears us, let us offer our prayers to God. Our response is:

R. Children: Lord, hear our prayer.

1. For the Church: that God may help us speak the truth with love and welcome those who seek peace, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For our families, school, and parish: that we may apologize when we are wrong, forgive one another, and repair broken friendships, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For children who are bullied, lonely, frightened, or unsafe: that caring adults may hear them, protect them, and help them, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For anyone who is sick, sad, or in need, and for the prayers we hold quietly in our hearts, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

5. For the prayers we hold quietly in our hearts... (pause), we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader:

Loving God, hear the prayers we offer together. Help us care for one another and live according to your commandment of love.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and reflect on what they have heard and what they are now doing. Be mindful of children who may have difficulty finding their families.

Please note that the Handouts are available at:

Bulletin: TheKidsBulletin.com – Goodwill donation suggested

Quiz Handout provided by: thewordthisweek.net



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