

We Respond

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ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) You are just, O Lord, and your judgement is right; treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 94)

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

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

LECTOR: 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. **R.**

LECTOR: 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 **R.**

LECTOR: 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." **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! God was in Christ, to reconcile the world to himself, and the Good News of reconciliation he has entrusted to us. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is yearning for you, my God; my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.

Or

I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

TODAY'S READINGS Ezekiel 33:7-9; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20

NEXT WEEK (24th Sunday of Year A) Sirach 27:30-28:7; Roman 14:7-9; Matthew 18:21-35

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*Correct with
care*



6 September 2020 23rd Sunday Year A

As his ship sailed through the heavy fog, the captain remained on the bridge and put his crew on high alert. Soon, one of the lookouts reported a light to starboard and the light remained steady. Another ship was coming toward them and on a dangerous course that would result in a collision. The captain radioed the other ship to change course.

Back came the terse answer, "Advise that you change course. This is a lighthouse!" The captain changed course. Today's gospel reading addresses the issue of what to do about a member of the Christian community who has sinned seriously but refuses to amend their ways. It tells us to be like the lighthouse keeper and advise a change of course to avoid going aground on the rocks of error.

The gospel further advises that we need to exercise this responsibility with sensitivity. Don't blaze away with both barrels of reproof. Instead, take courage, speak personally, one-to-one with the offending member and help them to see the error of their ways. Be ready to exercise liberal forgiveness. If this fails, go with two or three reliable and mature Christians who may persuade a change of heart. If this second attempt is unsuccessful, that person is to be excluded from the Christian community i.e. excommunicated.

Communion in faith and morals is the deepest vocation of God's people – the Church. We are one family under God and those bonds of communion are not to be compromised or diluted. Excommunication from this community is a drastic step. Perhaps, in the past, we have been too eager to excommunicate people. Over time the people of God have learned to be more open, tolerant and forgiving. However, it is also true that, as Church, we have lost some of the appetite to confront our wayward and obstinate members. Perhaps we have overvalued individuality and neglected to properly appreciate the vital role community occupies in Christ's vision for his Church.

We must continue to value the individual person and respect that person's rights and choices. But it is plainly wrong to condone and accept opinions and life choices that contradict Jesus's teachings.

The gospel advises us to take courage and to confront and challenge the intransigent members of our Christian community. It insists that we confront them but in a sensitive manner that demonstrates both our love and care for the offending person and for the Christian community. We must not resile from our Christian duty to be a 'lighthouse' to steer our misguided Christian brothers and sisters from the rocks of error.

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