

MY NEIGHBOR'S KEEPER

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

CYCLE A

Ezekiel 33:7-9
Romans 13:8-10
Matthew 18:15-20

OPENING PRAYER

(The community joins in singing, "Companions on the Journey". The song may be found on the Internet.

- Leader: Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord;
 let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.
 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
 let us joyfully sing psalms to him.
- All: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
- Leader: Come, let us bow down in worship;
 let us kneel before the Lord who made us.
 For he is our God,
 and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.
- All: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
- Leader: Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
 "Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
 as in the day of Massah in the desert,
 where your fathers tempted me;
 they tested me though they had seen my works."
- All: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

2. Mention a time when someone warned you about some ill-advised action you were about to take. How did you respond?

COMMENTARY

Am I my sister's keeper? Am I my brother's keeper? Our readings answer a resounding, "Yes." But don't we live in the time of "I'm OK, You're OK", and "If it feels good, do it!" The answer is another, "Yes." Times change, but our God does not. From the creation of the first human life to the conception of our newest child, our God is saying that we are not only morally responsible for our own behavior, but we are also accountable to one another. We are to act toward our brothers and sisters with the same love that God shows to us. Like our God, we cannot force one another to act this way or that. But out of love we can and we must warn a sister or brother at risk. When danger is near, be it physical or moral, we must speak up. It's not a fashionable path to follow these days. But it is the path our God calls us to walk.



Our readings do not ask us to judge one another. God will do that someday. We are being asked to care enough to do the uncomfortable thing when it is required. When we see someone acting immorally, we are asked to recognize that we are a community under God who owe one another love. As Christians, we were formed with knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. It is not always easy to do the right thing or to not do the wrong thing, but it is usually easy to tell the difference. God does not ask us to cast stones at others. God asks us to love one another and to have the courage to speak his word to one another, not only when it is easy, but also when it is hard.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

1. Name a time when you observed another who was in moral danger. What did you do or what didn't you do?
2. Mention a time when someone warned you about some ill-advised

RESPONSE IN ACTION

1. Set aside some time this week to examine your conscience. Take stock of your relationships. If there is someone you have hurt, go to that person and seek to make it right. Celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation.
2. The next time you are involved in a conversation that is heading down a dark road, bring that conversation back into God's light.
3. Affirm and encourage someone you have observed making a choice for the good that could have gone another way.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The facilitator calls the community to a time of silence and prayerful contrition. The facilitator invites prayers of praise, thanksgiving and petition. To each prayer, members respond, "Walk with us, Lord.")

Leader: Dearest God, we have heard you tell us that we are not just responsible for our own actions. You call us to help our brothers and sisters. You call them to help us. We ask you to give us the wisdom to recognize good and evil. We ask you to give us the strength to do what is right. We ask you to give us the courage to help others. Be with us, Lord, Walk with us. Lord. In Jesus' name, we pray.

All: Amen.

(The session concludes with the exchange of a sign of peace.)