



# Celebrate

Sunday, September 6, 2026

15th Sunday after Pentecost

*Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.*

## Prayer of the Day

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O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## First Reading

Ezekiel 33:7-11

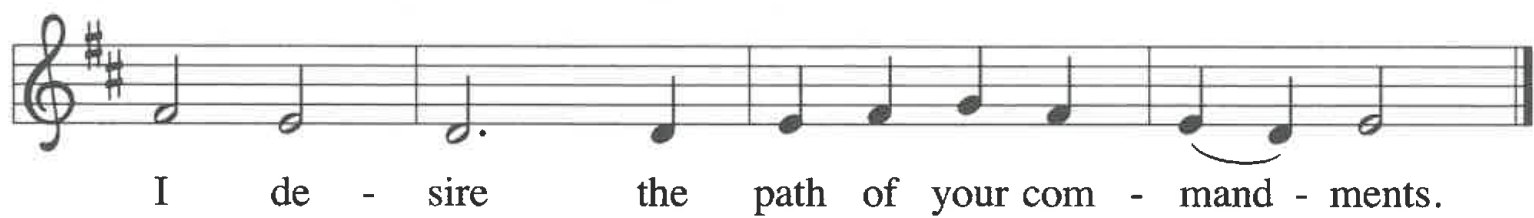
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*God appointed Ezekiel as a sentinel for the house of Israel. Ezekiel must faithfully convey God's warnings to the people. Remarkably, God—who is about to attack Jerusalem—gives a warning with the hope that repentance will make the attack unnecessary.*

So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup>If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, 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. <sup>9</sup>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.

<sup>10</sup>Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel: Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" <sup>11</sup>Say to them: As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?



Teach me, O LORD, the way <sup>1</sup> of your statutes,  
and I shall keep it <sup>1</sup> to the end.

<sup>34</sup>**Give me understanding, and I shall <sup>1</sup> keep your teaching;  
I shall keep it with <sup>1</sup> all my heart.**

<sup>35</sup>Lead me in the path of <sup>1</sup> your commandments,  
for that is <sup>1</sup> my desire.

<sup>36</sup>**Incline my heart to <sup>1</sup> your decrees  
and not to <sup>1</sup> unjust gain.   **R****

<sup>37</sup>Turn my eyes from be- <sup>1</sup> holding falsehood;  
give me life <sup>1</sup> in your way.

<sup>38</sup>**Fulfill your promise <sup>1</sup> to your servant,  
which is for <sup>1</sup> those who fear you.**

<sup>39</sup>Turn away the reproach <sup>1</sup> that I dread,  
because your judg- <sup>1</sup> ments are good.

<sup>40</sup>**Behold, I long for <sup>1</sup> your commandments;  
by your righteousness en- <sup>1</sup> liven me.   **R****

*The obligation of Christians is to love one another and so fulfill the heart and goal of the law. Clothes make the person as we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and live today in light of the future God has in store for us.*

Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>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, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

<sup>11</sup>Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the

moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; <sup>12</sup>the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; <sup>13</sup>let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

## Gospel

## Matthew 18:15-20

*Jesus offers practical advice to his disciples on how individuals—and the church as a whole—should go about restoring relationships when one member has sinned against another.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] “If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup>But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen

even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

# Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Reminded of God’s gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us.

A brief silence.

Proclaiming God, empower your church throughout the world to announce the words you give us. Open us to receive your word in unexpected ways. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Forming God, renew the cycles of your creation that provide for the needs of all. Protect grasslands, marshes, swamps, and all places of transition. Heal communities crying out after disaster (*especially*). Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Governing God, turn all who create, enforce, or interpret legislation away from selfish gain and toward your promise of good for all, especially the good of all who labor. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Attending God, wake us up to any around us who are in need. Restore broken relationships, failing health, frayed emotions, and the hurts we carry with us. (*We pray especially for . . .*) Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Gathering God, resolve conflicts in this community through your righteousness and grace. Reconcile us to each other, making your good news known even through our imperfections. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Loving God, all who die in faith have life with you. We give you thanks for the nearness of your salvation for (*name/s, and*) all who have gone before us. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask, and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus’ name.  
**Amen.**

# Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** Psalm 119:65-72. **Tuesday** Romans 13:1-7. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Peter Claver, priest, missionary to Colombia, died 1654) Matthew 21:18-22. **Thursday** Psalm 103:[1-7] 8-13. **Friday** Genesis 41:53—42:17. **Saturday** Matthew 6:7-15. **Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost** (commemoration of John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, died 407) Genesis 50:15-21; Psalm 103:[1-7] 8-13; Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35.

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