

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday Mass Readings & Spiritual Leadership Guide

September 6, 2026 · Lectionary 127

Sunday Mass Readings

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 33:7–9

Thus says the LORD: You, son of man, I have appointed watchman for the house of Israel; when you hear me say anything, you shall warn them for me. If I tell the wicked, “O wicked one, you shall surely die,” and you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked from his way, the wicked shall die for his guilt, but I will hold you responsible for his death. But if you warn the wicked, trying to turn him from his way, and he refuses to turn from his way, he shall die for his guilt, but you shall save yourself.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 95:1–2, 6–7, 8–9

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

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.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

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.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

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.”

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

*Men Helping Men Step Up and Become Better Spiritual Leaders
by Following Christ and the Teachings of His Church*



SECOND READING

Romans 13:8–10

Brothers and sisters: Owe nothing to anyone, 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 kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.

GOSPEL

Matthew 18:15–20

Jesus said to his disciples: “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again, amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

All readings sourced from USCCB, Lectionary 127. bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/090626.cfm

Reflection

Ezekiel names a hard truth: love sometimes requires warning. The watchman is responsible not for controlling the response, but for faithfully speaking what must be said. Paul keeps that responsibility anchored in love—every commandment is fulfilled in love of neighbor. Jesus then gives the practical pattern for reconciliation: go directly, go humbly, go with witnesses if needed, and seek restoration rather than humiliation. The person formed by these readings is neither avoidant nor harsh. He speaks truth because he loves, pursues reconciliation because Christ is present where two or three gather, and refuses to confuse peacekeeping with peacemaking.

Leadership Principles

PRINCIPLE 1

Truth-Telling Is an Act of Love

Ezekiel's watchman must warn because silence can harm (Ez 33:7–9). As one striving to become a better spiritual leader, love should compel you to not avoid hard conversations. Jesus says to speak first between you and another alone (Mt 18:15). Speak with humility and courage because another person's good is worth the discomfort.

PRINCIPLE 2

You Are Responsible for Faithfulness, Not Control

The watchman is responsible to warn, not to force the response (Ez 33:9). Faithful leading of your family and those in your care often means doing what love requires and releasing the outcome to God.

PRINCIPLE 3

Love Is the Fulfillment of the Law

Paul says every commandment is summed up in loving your neighbor as yourself (Rom 13:9). Rules without love become weapons. Love without truth becomes sentiment. Christian leadership holds both together..

PRINCIPLE 4

Christ Is Present in Reconciliation

Where two or three gather in his name, Jesus is in their midst (Mt 18:20). Difficult conversations are not merely interpersonal management; they can become sacred spaces where Christ works healing and truth.

Discussion Questions

QUESTION 1

Ezekiel describes the role of a watchman (Ez 33:7). Is there a situation where you are being asked to speak a warning, correction, or hard truth that you have been avoiding?

QUESTION 2

Paul says love does no evil to the neighbor (Rom 13:10). How can you tell the difference between avoiding conflict to protect yourself and delaying a conversation out of genuine love for the other person?

QUESTION 3

Jesus says to go first to your brother alone (Mt 18:15). When someone does not listen, Jesus gives a process that is patient and communal (Mt 18:16–17). How do you usually respond when people resist correction—withdraw, escalate, gossip, or persist in love?

QUESTION 4

Can you reflect on a case where you need to trust that Christ is present in a difficult conversation rather than waiting until everything feels safe or easy?

Closing Action

A concrete, personal response drawn from the readings this week:

This week, identify one relationship or leadership situation that needs a direct, loving conversation. Write down the truth that needs to be spoken, the love that should shape your tone, and the restoration you hope for. Then take the first faithful step privately, without gossip or delay.

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.” — Matthew 18:1

Closing Prayer

Lord God, you appointed Ezekiel as a watchman. Give us the courage to speak when love requires truth and the humility to speak without pride or anger.

Jesus, you taught us to seek reconciliation directly and patiently. Guard us from gossip, avoidance, and harshness. Help us win back brothers rather than win arguments.

Holy Spirit, soften our hearts today. Make our communities places where truth and love meet, and where Christ is truly present in the hard work of reconciliation. Amen.

“If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” — Psalm 95:8