

CELEBRATE SABBATH

Twenty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Silence, Solitude and stillness are prerequisites for serenity.

Ezekiel 33: 7-9

Watchman on the city walls or out on the hills formed part of the defense system in biblical times. They had to sound a warning when undesired foreigners or strangers were spotted. Ezekiel sees the prophet as such a watchman in charge of the well-being of the community. He must fulfill his mission.

In this excerpt, the prophet reflects on his responsibility to call his people to conversion, to point to the presence of evil, to warn people of the dangers of wickedness and call forth change. He reflects on his responsibility to be vigilant like a watchman on the city wall. We share in this prophetic mission of Ezekiel: to be vigilant, to be the voice of God, to be mutually correcting and forgiving, and be supportive of each other. Ezekiel describes this mutual concern as a personal responsibility for which God will hold us accountable.

Be vigilant! Be watchful! Correct one another! Help one another change!

Psalms 95

This psalm is well known. It is part of the morning prayer of the Church. By the end of the OT period, the temple covered a large area. One reached its first gate by ascending a broad flight of steps. Then having gone through the gates at the top (Ps.24), the worshiper entered the court of the Gentiles, an open space, colonnaded round its walls. Into it anyone could enter, Jew or Gentile. Having crossed over this courtyard, one entered another court, into which Jewish women were allowed to accompany their men folk. But only the male Jew could go into the next court.

The division between these three courts is what St. Paul says Jesus broke down, for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28). The lay worshiper could go no further. Entry into the final court was for the priests alone. Even this was broken down eventually. During the reformation in Europe, the railing was removed which had prevented the laity from approaching right up to the Altar and finally after the second Vatican Council in our catholic tradition. This is not because the priest had become mere laymen. It was because all people were granted what belonged to them in the first place by their call in OT times "a kingdom of priests" (Ex.19:6) and by Baptism anointed "priest, prophet and king".

**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.**

Romans 13:8-10

In 13:1-7, Paul spoke about man's debt to society. He insisted that man should pay his debt to society however unpleasant it may be. He has certain obligations to the state and to the local authorities and he must fulfill these obligations.

Immediately after these thoughts, now, he turns to obligations to one another. He says, we have no debts to each other "except to love each other". This is the fulfillment of the Law. All commandments are held together by this one command to "love each other". Mutual love calls forth mutual support and mutual correction. Love, he says is the complete fulfillment of the Law. This is expressed in our concern for the well-being of others.

The one debt that a man must pay every day and yet, at the same time, must go on owing every day, is the debt to "love each other".

Mathew 18:15-20

Jesus taught his disciples to make honest efforts to help one another recognize and correct the mistakes and wrong-doings. He taught them to spare no effort to correct a person. He also taught them to be patient in correcting brothers and sisters as God is patient and offer one another every chance for change.

He taught them to treat them as Gentiles and tax collectors if they refuse to respond, after all efforts have been made. Jesus gave them his own example of how to treat Gentiles and tax Collectors, with understanding and compassion.

Help and support one another realize mistakes and correct them.

In this excerpt, Mathew makes special reference to the power and the responsibility of the community to forgive "to bind and to loose" and coming to experience the Lord's presence in prayer, "where two or three are gathered...I will be there". A community gathered and united in prayer has the power to forgive and to heal and hold each other as brothers and sisters in mutual love. A praying community is a forgiving and healing and loving community.

Jesus promised them his presence whenever they are gathered in his name. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them".

Saint of the Day, September 6 - Bl. Frédéric Ozanam and 29 other saints are remembered on this day

Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam was born on April 23, 1813 in Milan, Italy. He was a French literary scholar, lawyer, journalist and equal rights advocate. Frédéric was the fifth of Jean and Marie Ozanam's 14 children, one of only three to reach adulthood. As a teenager he began having doubts about his religion. Reading and prayer did not seem to help, but long walking discussions with Father Noirot of the Lyons College clarified matters a great deal.

A discussion club which Frédéric organized sparked the turning point in his life. In this club, Catholics, atheists, and agnostics debated the issues of the day. Once, after Frédéric spoke about Christianity's role in civilization, a club member said: "Let us be frank, Mr. Ozanam; let us also be very particular. What do you do besides talk to prove the faith you claim is in you?"

Frédéric was stung by the question. He soon decided that his words needed a grounding in action. He and a friend began visiting Paris tenements and offering assistance as best as they could. Soon a group dedicated to helping individuals in need under the patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul formed around Frédéric.

He founded with fellow students the Conference of Charity, later known as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. His experiences of service to the poor, reflected on and informed by the Vincentian Spirituality that he and his friends followed, transformed Frédéric and led him to anticipate many of the elements of modern Catholic Social Teaching. A husband and father, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, offers an example of living with integrity and charity.

In 1852, poor health forced Frédéric to return to Italy with his wife and daughter. He died on September 8, 1853. Frédéric was beatified in 1997.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs