

Twenty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20

Scripture Focus

In the first reading Ezekiel has been appointed by God as "watchman." Such a person had to keep watch and warn the city of approaching danger. For Ezekiel, personal responsibility is important. The prophet must warn individuals as well as the group. The Gospel reading treats this same theme. Matthew is the only Gospel writer to speak of relationships and responsibilities within the Church. He also offers practical guidelines for fulfilling these responsibilities. Serious community decisions are to be made only after serious prayer. Wisdom must be sought from God and from the presence of Christ in their midst.

Life Focus

1. Relate a time when you hurt someone and the person confronted you about it. How did you feel and how did you respond?
2. Some conflicts are part of any ongoing group. How does your small church community handle conflict?
3. Relate a time when your prayers were answered but not as you expected.
4. When have you experienced the power of prayer through your small community?

1 ½ - Two Hour Format for small Church Community Meeting

Gathering (A few minutes are spent settling down)

1. Faith Sharing in Small Groups

Read the gospel of next Sunday out loud. Then take some time to read and reflect on Scripture Focus and Life Focus questions.

Count off for people to form groups of three (four at the most) to share on the Life Focus questions. (20 minutes)

2. Faith Sharing with the Whole Group

Reread the gospel passage out loud.

Then entire group focuses attention on answering the following questions:
(Remember to honor and respect the confidential nature of the previous faith sharing.)

From your faith sharing in the smaller groups, what touched, encouraged or motivated you?

How might it affect your attitude or actions at home, at work, or in the larger community?

How about your small church community –how might all of you together respond to the gospel's challenge? (20 minutes)

3. Shared Prayer

Reread the gospel passage out loud a third time.

Then stand in a circle and take a few turns praying spontaneously together as the Spirit moves the group (prayers of petition, thanksgiving, praise, whatever). This is the time to hear the particular needs of the members and to pray for them.

Refreshments