



a Kendall Hunt Company

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Intermediate - RCLB Lectionary



Intermediate Session

Ezekiel 33:7-9

Matthew 18:15-20

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Loving God, when we choose to do wrong, you call us back to you.

Thank you for making our hearts clean again.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.



Opening Life Reflection

The theme for today is conversion. On a table place an empty coffee can or plastic bottle, glue, scissors, and colored tissue paper. Explain to the children that you would like to work together to change the old can or bottle into something new and useful. With the materials provided, begin working together to decorate the can or bottle. Discuss.

- How were we able to change an old object into something new?
- Why is it important for people to change and grow?
- Who helps you to change and grow?

Allow time for discussion. God helps us to change and grow. We can help others to change and grow. God wants us all to live as members of his family.

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Listening to the Word of God

In the Old Testament reading listen to how God wants to give the wicked people a chance to change.

Read Ezekiel 33:7-9.

Allow for silence.

Scripture Discussion Starters

- Why does God give the wicked people a chance to change?
- What does God want Ezekiel to do?
- What will happen to Ezekiel if he doesn't warn the people?

In the gospel today listen to what Jesus tells his followers about helping sinners come back to the community.



Read Matthew 18:15-20.

Allow for silence.

- What does Jesus tell his followers about helping sinners come back to the community?
- What will happen if the sinful person listens?
- What will happen if the sinful member of the Church refuses to listen?
- What does Jesus say will happen when two or three are gathered in his name?



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Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the **Catechist Background** section.

In today's first reading from the Old Testament, God gives the wicked people a chance to change their ways. God commands Ezekiel to warn the people about their sinfulness. Ezekiel is told to speak every word God gives him to the people. God tells Ezekiel that he will be responsible for the people's wrongdoing if he refuses to preach God's word to them. The preaching of Ezekiel will give every individual a chance to repent. God will respond favorably to those whom return to him in faithfulness.

In today's gospel we find traces of the struggles of the early Christian community to live out Jesus' command to love one another. Jesus encourages his followers to make every effort to bring the sinner back to the community. If the wrongdoer refuses to listen when confronted alone, other members of the Church should be called upon to help. Today's passage shows that conversion of heart is always possible. People can change their ways and the Church community should help those who have gone astray. Jesus makes the point that prayer is important in such matters because a change of heart is a gift from God.

Questions for Deeper Reflection



- Why does God want to give sinners a chance to change?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to get along with others?
- Who helps you to follow Jesus' command to love one another?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the **Gospel in Life**.]

Doctrinal Discussion Starters

Conversion

In the gospels we hear the command to "repent" right from the start of Jesus' public ministry. Although we were created to be good and to live in friendship with God, too often we turn away from God's love for us. Sometimes we make choices that do not respect others or ourselves. This was the case in Jesus' time as well. Jesus' preaching and ministry called for a turn around of the person, a call to let go of old ways and to embrace a life of truth and love.



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We call the movement of turning our hearts back to God's love conversion.

Catholics understand that conversion is a lifelong journey of growth in friendship with God. We do not make this journey alone. All members of the Church community support and challenge one another to grow in faith. The entire body of the Church is called to conversion. The sacraments help us to live as children of God. In the sacraments God's love heals us and we become closer to God.

We all make mistakes and take a wrong turn every now and then. As God's children, we are called back to friendship with God and God's people, the Church. Our faith tells us that God gives us the grace and the ability to begin anew.

- What is conversion?
- Why does God want us to change and grow?
- How does the Church community help us to change and grow?

Sacrament Connection

Jesus gave his Church the power to forgive sins. When we sin, we have the opportunity to be reconciled with God and the Church by celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation. Reconciliation restores our relationship of love and friendship with God.

The Gospel in Life

How can you grow closer to God this week?