

**Sunday 23rd Week of Ordinary Time**  
**Child Protection Week. Sept 3rd-9th, 2020**  
**Homily Suggestion**

*The message of the Word of God for us this week could not be more appropriate. Each of our readings, in different ways and from different perspectives, speaks about the mutual demands of love and responsibility for each other. Our responsibility to respect, cherish and heal on the one hand, and our responsible to protect and to make accountable all who harm or hurt our brothers or sisters.*

**Ezekiel 33:7-9:** "I have appointed you as a watchman for the house of Israel"  
**Rom. 13: 8-20:** "All the commandments are summed up in this single command: 'you must love your neighbour'.  
Love is the one thing that will not hurt your brothers and sisters"  
**Math: 18: 15ff :** "If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him "

In this short reading God gives the prophet Ezekiel a commission to speak the truth to Israel, however uncomfortable it may be. Ezekiel must be like the Watchman sounding the alarm. He has to call out to the leaders and the people of Israel their criminally destructive behaviour. He has to shame them for their continual tolerance of and blindness to the evil they allow. God is saying: "Enough!!!"

Similarly, Jesus in the Gospel begs his disciples to challenge any destructive behaviour in the community. Whatever eats away at the life of the community has to be called out. It is not only something we could do; it is something we must do. For Jesus, it has to be absolutely clear what should be, must be, and that what should not be, must never be.

Ezekiel also, does not only beg Israel to cease its self-destructive behaviour. With a new heart, with a heart washed clean, he says, Israel must commit themselves to being God's own community, a community and space that is just, safe, and caring for the most vulnerable as God's little ones. Just as God has been for them.

Paul in his letter to the Romans exhorts the community to be a place where no one gets hurt, to be so filled with love that everyone feels protected and safe.

Sadly, but thank God, it has taken both a Royal Commission and the Media to call out the self-destructive and criminal behaviour of the church and our society. We have not been the watchman that we should have been. Others have forced us to hear the voices of the survivors and their families. Our Church, and other churches and institutions are now acknowledging the ways we have protected the criminal behaviour.

And we are working to become again the people, the community God intended us to be. As Ezekiel called on Israel and as Jesus exhorted his disciples to be alert to wrongdoing, we must continue to acknowledge our failure to protect our children, to acknowledge the criminal behaviour of too many of our priests and religious.

But also, as Ezekiel called on Israel, and as Paul reminded the Romans, we are called to become a renewed people, with hearts washed clean, a place and space where love and protection can thrive.

This Child Safeguarding week is our annual reminder that we must repair the past, listen to those whose lives have been destroyed, care for them endlessly. And then we must attend tirelessly to being both the civil society, the caring communities and a Church honest and earnest to be better, that we should always have been.

And, when needed, not to be afraid of calling our shepherds and leaders to account.

Fr. Tom McDonough CP

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*"May the Passion of Jesus Christ be always in our hearts."*