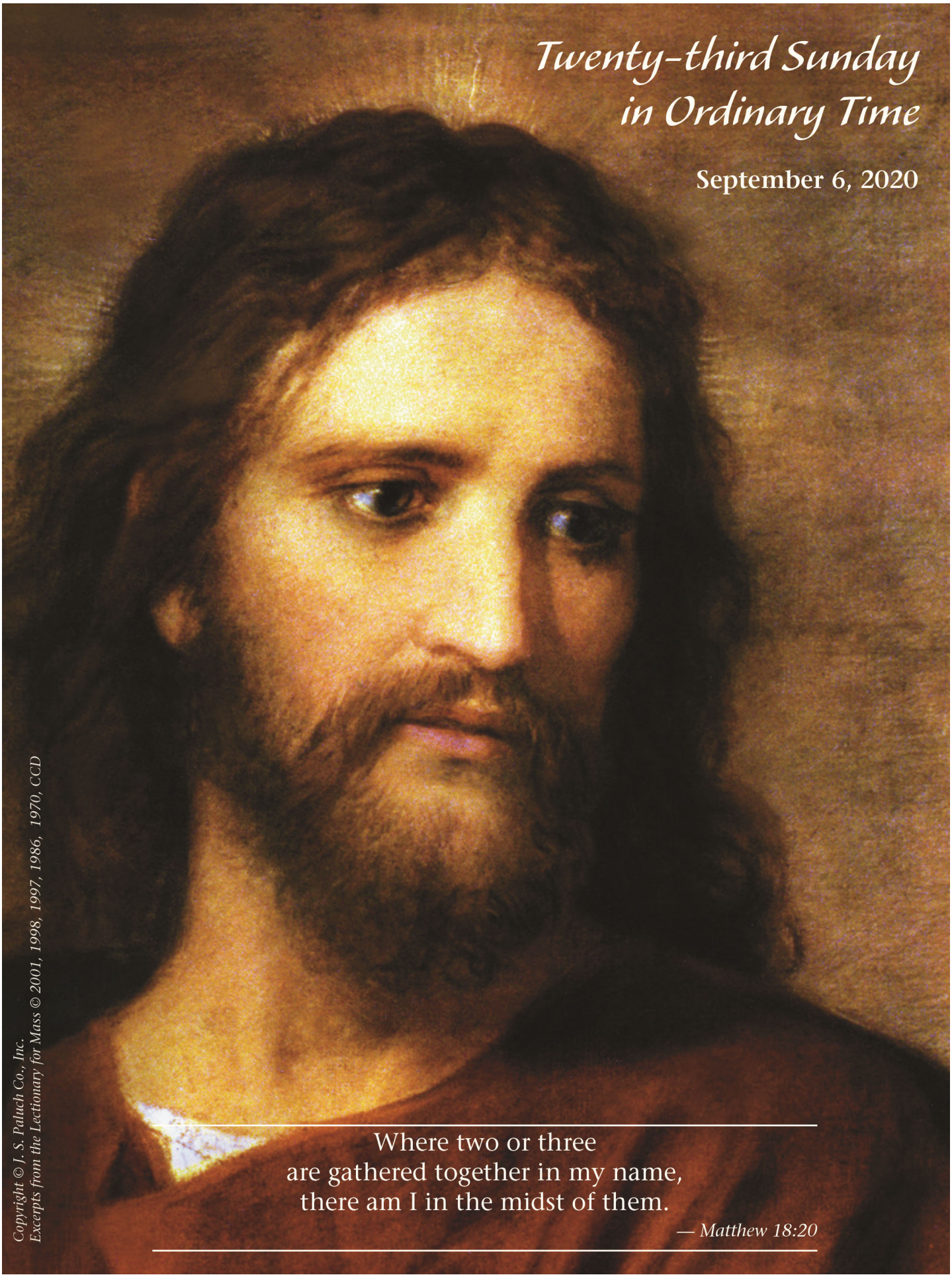

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 6, 2020

Where two or three
are gathered together in my name,
there am I in the midst of them.

— Matthew 18:20

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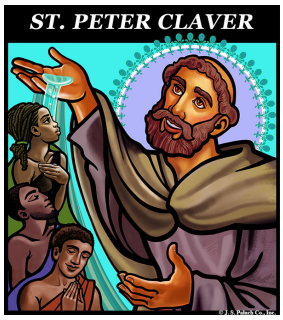
Saint Peter Claver (1581-1654)

September 9

Nearly two hundred years before the Declaration of Independence proclaimed "that all men are created equal," two hundred fifty years before the Emancipation Proclamation mandated an end to slavery, three hundred fifty years before Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream," and four hundred years before the election of an American president boasting African heritage, Peter Claver left his native Spain behind to volunteer for the Jesuit missions in Colombia. There, he was horrified both by slavery as an institution and by the inhuman brutality inflicted upon the slaves. He solemnly vowed to become "the slave of the slaves," and lived that vow heroically for close to forty years. Not knowing their language, Peter began his ministry among the slaves by using the universal language of practical charity, providing medical care and a tangible though wordless assertion of their human dignity: "We spoke to them not with words but with our hands, kneeling beside them, bathing their faces and bodies, encouraging them with friendly gestures" (see Liturgy of the Hours, Volume 4, p. 2018). Then came evangelization and baptism. Holiness as human wholeness: Peter Claver's enduring witness.



—Peter Scagnelli, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Labor

A truly American sentiment recognizes the dignity of labor and the fact that honor lies in honest toil.

—Grover Cleveland

A Message Of Love

In the final verses of today's Gospel reading Jesus says that when two or three are gathered in his name, "there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). So we understand that fraternal correction is always undertaken with Jesus present to us.

Likewise, encouraging the good in others is not only the right thing for us to do, it is a necessity. The Lord tells the prophet Ezekiel that if he "does not speak out" to dissuade a person from evil, then he too will be held responsible. We live in a "do your own thing" age when moral objectivity is often ignored. Clearly when the message we share with others is one of love, our motives cannot ever be misinterpreted. As St. Paul writes, "Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10).

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Readings for the Week

Monday:	1 Cor 5:1-8; Ps 5:5-7, 12; Lk 6:6-11, or, for Labor Day, any readings from the Mass "For the Blessings of Human Labor," nos. 907-911
Tuesday:	Mi 5:1-4a or Rom 8:28-30; Ps 13:6; Mt 1:1-16, 18-23 [18-23]
Wednesday:	1 Cor 7:25-31; Ps 45:11-12, 14-17; Lk 6:20-26
Thursday:	1 Cor 8:1b-7, 11-13; Ps 139:1b-3, 13-14ab, 23-24; Lk 6:27-38
Friday:	1 Cor 9:16-19, 22b-27; Ps 84:3-6, 12; Lk 6:39-42
Saturday:	1 Cor 10:14-22; Ps 116:12-13, 17-18; Lk 6:43-49
Sunday:	Sir 27:30 — 28:7; Ps 103:1-4, 9-12; Rom 14:7-9; Mt 18:21-35

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time
Monday:	Labor Day
Tuesday:	The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Wednesday:	St. Peter Claver
Friday:	Patriot Day
Saturday:	The Most Holy Name of Mary; Blessed Virgin Mary

Today's Readings

First Reading — Warn the wicked and try to turn them from their ways (Ezekiel 33:7-9).

Psalm — If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts (Psalm 95).

Second Reading — Owe nothing to anyone, except mutual love (Romans 13:8-10).

Gospel — If two agree about anything for which they pray, it shall be granted to them (Matthew 18:15-20).

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Twenty-third Sunday
In Ordinary Time
September 6, 2020

"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."
—Matthew 18:19

Treasures From Our Tradition

In the early years of the church, most people never availed themselves of once-in-a-lifetime penance. Yet penitents were highly visible. They wore distinctive garments or chains, and they were relegated to special zones in the church. They might be dismissed from the Sunday assembly after the Word, forbidden to join in the Prayer of the Faithful or the Eucharist. This dismissal was done with great affection and tenderness as the bishop laid his hands on the heads of the sinners. During Lent almost everyone would identify with penitents by clothing, insignia, or by following the penitents' regular diet. Rather than sit in judgment over them, the church desired to intercede for them before the Lord. "Let Mother Church weep for you and wash away your sins with her tears," said St. Ambrose to his penitents in Milan. Ambrose liked to think of them as Jonah in the whale, meditating on his errors. In a letter to his sister he said that Jonah is also a sign of Christ in the tomb, and so he had great faith in the penitents' future proclamation of the Resurrection with their reclaimed status in the assembly.
—Rev. James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

If you ever thought that living as a Christian was always going to be easy, today's readings will convince you that this is not so. In the first reading from Ezekiel, the prophet was sent to convince the people in Jerusalem to return to God and God's ways; he bore rejection as a result of fulfilling his mission. In today's Gospel, Jesus instructs his followers to work toward reconciliation when we have been wronged, rather than remaining caught in anger or disappointment. Saint Paul captures what lies behind these instructions—love. "Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law." When we are tempted to walk away from a friend or co-worker with whom we disagree, or even more so when we worry that the person has turned away from the Lord, we are instead called to reach out in love.

Love As Christ Calls

The truth is, love is sometimes wonderfully charged with light and life, but it also often requires us to confront wrongdoing and injustice, to be patient and forgiving, and to work for peace and reconciliation. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to reflect the love of God which desires the best for every person and for all of humanity. Jesus was so committed to this mission of God's love that he gave himself as an offering of pure sacrifice. This is not easy love. It is compelling love, the sort of love that transforms and draws us toward the light and life that in our hearts we know we seek, and which we are called to share.

If Today You Hear His Voice

Where does this leave us when we experience conflict with others? As in all times and seasons, the best place to begin is in prayer. Listen for the voice of God in personal prayer, at Mass, in sacred scripture and other devotional reading, with trusted faithful and faith-filled friends. Listen with the compassion of the Lord in mind. And when you hear God's voice, pay attention! This sounds self-evident, yet how many of us hear God's voice but ask that we not be called to the challenge and discomfort of the situation, desiring instead to hope that things will simply get better? Perhaps they will, but perhaps you are called to bring the light and life of Christ to the situation, in love, for love, and through love, just as Jesus did. "If today you hear [God's] voice, harden not your hearts," says today's psalm. We often know the depth of love to which we are called. Today's readings invite us to listen and to act, to love our neighbor as ourselves, to desire the best for every person as God desires, and to be assured that God is in our midst.

Today's Readings: Ez 33:7–9; Ps 95:1–2, 6–7, 8–9; Rom 13:8–10; Mt 18:15–20

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Sunday Readings
September 6, 2020
Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1
Ez 33:7–8
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
Ps 95:1–2, 6–7, 8–9
R. (8) 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.

Reading 2
Rom 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
Mt 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."

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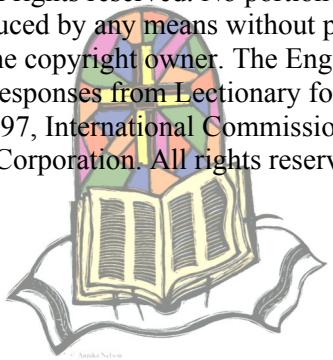

Prayer of the Faithful

Where two or three are gathered to pray, there God is in their midst. Confident that we are in God's presence, let us pray for the needs of the world.

For the safety of Christians everywhere, especially in Asia and the Near East, let us pray to the Lord.

For leaders of nations, that they will deal justly and humanely with all those over whom they have authority, let us pray to the Lord.

For workers everywhere, for just wages and safe working conditions, let us pray to the Lord.

For our own faith community as we learn more and more to be people of reconciliation and love, let us pray to the Lord.

For all who continue to suffer in the aftermath of the 9-11 attacks nineteen years ago, for all who lost their lives on that day and afterward, in our nation and abroad as a result of those attacks, and for renewed resolve to work toward peace in our world, let us pray to the Lord.

For all those who are sick, for all who suffer from COVID-19, and for all who have died, especially N., N., and N., let us pray to the Lord.

For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord.

**Loving God,
in your Son you showed us how to love our neighbors.
We ask you to hear these our prayers
for our neighbors in need,
and grant them through your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ.**

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Letters from Heaven

Start with the letter in the shaded square. Draw a path from letter to letter to complete the Biblical statement. Move one square at a time, up, down, right, left and diagonally until all letters are used once. Ignore any black squares.

Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in ...

M	F	O	T
E	I	T	S
M	H	D	■
■	E	H	T

T _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _."

Answer: the midst of them

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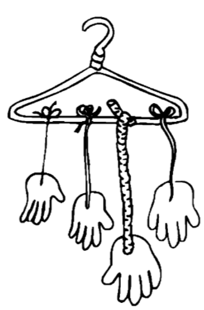
Creative Kids

Helping Hands

1. Trace your hand onto regular white or light colored construction paper. Cut out the hand.
2. Repeat step 1 until you have 10 hands.
3. Write one of the Ten Commandments or draw a picture symbolizing one of them on one hand.
4. Continue this process until each hand has one of the Ten Commandments on it.
5. Cut 10 different sized pieces of string or yarn and tape one side to the hand and the other the straight part of a hanger.
6. Hang your helping hands in a place in your home to help remind your family members of the Ten Commandments.



GOD'S WORD FOR CHILDREN!

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

If two or more people come together in Jesus' name to pray, He will be there and their prayers will be answered.

Ez 33:7-9 Ps 95: 1-2, 6-9
Rom 13:8-10 Mt 18:15-20

Directions: Circle the words below in the seek and find maze.

TWO PRAY TOGETHER AMEN JESUS

T	B	W	A	L	C	I	N
D	O	E	A	F	B	M	Q
E	T	G	M	J	E	S	U
T	H	J	E	S	U	S	T
A	N	E	N	T	W	O	K
S	W	E	R	P	H	B	H
P	P	R	A	Y	F	E	O
A	S	D	F	E	T	Y	R

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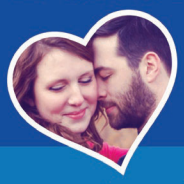
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