Introduction to the Mass

Today, the Word of God reminds us that we are deeply responsible for one another. In a world that often encourages individual isolation and indifference, Christ challenges us to build true Christian community through accountability, reconciliation, and love. He promises us that wherever two or three are gathered in His name, He is there in their midst.

CHILDRENS LITURGY- call the children forward.

(A brief pause for silent reflection follows, leading into the Penitential Act)

Homily: "Bound by Love, Called to Accountability"

The readings for this Sunday confront us with one of the most challenging aspects of the Christian life: our mutual responsibility for one another.

In our first reading, the prophet Ezekiel is told that he is appointed as a watchman for the house of Israel. If he sees danger—if he sees someone straying into destructive sin—and remains silent, God holds him accountable. In our Gospel today, Jesus takes up this same theme, giving the Church a clear, practical guide on how to handle sin and conflict within the community. He speaks of what we call *fraternal correction*.

Let's be honest: none of us like conflict. When someone hurts us, or when we see a fellow Christian losing their way, our natural reaction is often either to gossip behind their back, or to withdraw in cold indifference, muttering, *"It's none of my business."* But Jesus tells us today that the spiritual health of our brother or sister *is* our business.

However, Christ's method of correction is completely different from the cancel-culture or public shaming of our modern world. Jesus commands a path of extreme gentleness, privacy, and respect. First, go privately. If that fails, take a small, trusted group. Only as a last resort do you bring it to the wider church community. The goal of this process is never punishment, humiliation, or proving ourselves right; the goal is always reconciliation—as Jesus says, *"to win back your brother or sister."*

How do we find the courage to do this difficult work? St. Paul gives us the key in our second reading from the Romans: *"Avoid getting into debt to anyone, except the debt of kindness to one another... Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour."*

True Christian love is not a vague, sentimental feeling that tolerates everything. True love care deeply about the truth and the eternal destiny of the other person. When we correct someone out of genuine love, we are paying that "debt of kindness."

Finally, Jesus wraps this difficult teaching in a beautiful promise of presence and power. He reminds us that when we pray together in unity—when we lay down our conflicts and align our hearts—our prayers have immense power. *"Where two or three are gathered in my name,"* He says, *"I am there with them."*

Let us pray today for the grace to be true watchmen for one another. May we love each other enough to speak the truth in charity, forgive freely, and live in the radical unity that draws Christ into our very midst.

Bidding Prayers (Prayers of the Faithful)

Priest: God our Father has promised that when two or three are gathered in the name of His Son, He is present among them. Relying on that beautiful promise of unity, we lift up our hearts and bring our needs before Him.

Reader:

- **For the Holy Church:** That she may be a vibrant icon of reconciliation, where conflict is resolved with humility, and where the debt of mutual love is continually paid. **Lord, hear us.**
- **For our Parish Community:** That we may take seriously our calling to be "watchmen" for one another, looking out for those who are straying, lonely, or falling into despair. **Lord, hear us.**
- **For a Spirit of Forgiveness:** That God may soften hard hearts, heal fractured families, and give us the grace to forgive those who have sinned against us. **Lord, hear us.**
- **For Peace in our World:** That world leaders may realize that love of neighbour is the only path to lasting peace, leading them to work together to end war, poverty, and injustice. **Lord, hear us.**
- **For the Sick and Those in Crisis:** We pray for all who are suffering in mind, body, or spirit. May they feel the comfort of Christ's presence and the practical support of this community. **Lord, hear us.**
- **For Those Who Have Died:** That they may find eternal rest in the peace of Christ, and that those who mourn them may be comforted by the hope of the resurrection. **Lord, hear us.**

We turn now to Mary, our Blessed Mother, who stood in perfect faith at the foot of the Cross. We ask her to join her prayers to ours as we say:
...**Hail Mary**...

In the quiet of our hearts, let us now present our own personal prayers and petitions to our heavenly Father...

Priest. Almighty God, look with love upon this family gathered in Your name. Grant what we ask in faith and give us the strength to fulfil the law of love in our daily lives. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Solemn Concluding Blessing

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Priest.: Bow down your heads for the blessing.

Priest: May Almighty God bless you with a spirit of unity and true peace, and keep you always secure in His unfailing love. **All:** Amen.

Priest.: May Christ Jesus, who promises to be where two or three are gathered, fill your homes with His divine presence and guide you to walk in the path of reconciliation. **All:** Amen.

Priest.: May the Holy Spirit inspire you to pay the debt of mutual kindness to everyone you meet, making you true witnesses of the Gospel in the world. **All:** Amen.

Priest.: And may the blessing of almighty God, the **Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit**, come down on you and remain with you for ever. **All:** Amen.

Priest.: Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

All: Thanks be to God.