

Blessed Trinity Catholic Community † Spirit of Christ Mission
Twenty-Third Sunday Ordinary time, Labor Day, September 6, 2026
Ezekiel 33:7-9; Psalm 95, 6-7, 8-9; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20
Gathering Hymn: DIVERSE IN CULTURE, NATION AND RACE, Text Ruth Duck ©1993, GIA
Eucharistic Prayer for Various Needs III-Jesus, the Way to the Father
Homily: Fr. Ed Hislop



"The poor are not just people to be helped but the sacramental presence of the Lord!"

This remarkable phrase, from the writings of St Augustine, is quoted by Pope Leo in his first Apostolic Exhortation, *"I have loved you."* Delixi Te"

These powerful words echo through these days of turmoil and struggle among so many "poor of our day:"

that is those who live in fear, victims of hatred, exclusion and judgement. They are, Pope Leo reminds us, the real presence of Christ. This means that it is Christ who is hated, excluded, rounded up, sent away and judged: *"if today you hear his voice!"*

This gives a provocative meaning to the words of Ezekiel, *"I have appointed you,"* meaning us, *"watchman for the house."* If it is we who are appointed, those are ominous words! A command, it seems, to "look" and "see;" to "hear" and "listen;" *"harden not your hearts."* A command to see and listen to Christ in the screams and fears of so many in our country these days. The cry is loud. *"If today you hear his voice..."*

Whoever would have thought that what is happening could ever happen here, in our country? Who hears and listens; who looks and sees?

The greatest sin, perhaps, is to choose not to see, not to hear, not to "watch," or to believe there is nothing I or we can do, or that the hate-filled violence is justified or necessary. Hearts become hardened. Through it all the "voice of Christ" is shouting from the broken hearted, the "rounded up," the frightened screams of children, and from the so-called detention centers in too many places. Whoever would have thought? *"If today you hear his voice..."*

Through it all the "voice of Christ" shouts from the skies, the streets and fields of war fueled by hatred, neglect and self-interest. God cries, God sees, God wonders: Who will dissuade the wicked from their ways? And then we sing, *"If today you...you...hear his voice, harden not your hearts."* *"We are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides..."* The voice of Christ, the Gospel of life, love and hope, is not about yesterday but today... *"today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts," "owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another... your neighbor as yourself."*

Seek truth, converse, speak, listen and gather in communion; "be a meeting ground where hope and healing love are found;" hear the cries, name the evil, and listen to the hope and dream. Name the darkness but see the light of good. Work to be a holy communion that is true "standing with those who suffer wrong." Look into the signs of the times by the light of faith and service to the Gospel. *"Harden not your hearts."*

Recognize Christ in the broken and poured out. Break the silence, labor for justice, name the lies, and become a neighbor to the oppressed and

afflicted, as if they were Christ himself, for indeed they are. Stand as a living witness to truth and freedom, peace and justice—and do not grow weary. Be like Christ, do not exclude. *“Be a bridge of care, connecting people everywhere.”* Watch, and warn when you see the hatred and

hear the cry. This is the labor, work and mission, for which we are nourished here.

“The poor are not just people to be helped but the sacramental presence of the Lord!” Christ is there, among them. “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts!”

