Trinity 14A 2026 **10am Service** 6th September 2026

Scriptures: Ezekiel 33:1-9; Psalm 95; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 18:15-20

By The Reverend Ruth Li

We welcome today the Prior of Victoria, Edward Lewellin, and the members of the Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller, to commemorate a very important date in history for the Order, that is, the Great Siege of Malta.

In today's Gospel, we learn the need to be reconciled to each other and the power of prayer.

In times of conflict and disagreement, this teaching can be difficult for us to obey and practice in our daily lives. If we love God, we will listen to His teaching by loving one another as outlined by St Paul in his Letter to the Romans (13:8-14). If there is true love in our hearts for loving one another, we should tell the truth to our brothers and sisters if their actions are causing us harm.

In the New Testament, God appointed His Church, and in the Old Testament, God appointed the prophets to warn people and help them to live in a godly way.

In Ezekiel 33:1-9, the prophet Ezekiel, as the watchman, warned the people of Israel to change their ways, walk in God's way, and live for God.

Today, God speaks to us through His Word and Sacraments in His Church. We need to listen to God's voice and choose to live a godly life, pursuing God's will to be done in our lives as it is in heaven. It is just as we say during the Holy Communion, "*We who are many are one body, for we all share in the one bread.*" Since we are members of one another, we are accountable to one another. Even when one of us may not want that accountability, it is still an undeniable fact. In 1 Corinthians 12 there is a vivid picture of the early church showing mutual concern, mutual interest, and mutual accountability. Sometimes people are reluctant to see their faults and need to be told about them. Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, Himself saw the need for this when He taught His followers.

Jesus also teaches us about the power of prayer in His name:

"*Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.*" (Matthew 18:19) Here, Jesus tells us that He is ready to answer the Church's prayers.

This reading also assures us that Jesus is present in the assemblies of faithful people gathering according to His holy purposes, whenever two or three are gathered.

Matthew 18:20 points out that the words "in Jesus' name" are powerful. Whenever two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, He is there among them. That's why, at the end of each of our prayers, we say: "We offer this prayer through our Saviour Jesus Christ."

In the history of the Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem, the Great Siege of Malta provides a good example of how prayers can be answered.

In 1565, from 18th May to 8th September, the Great Siege of Malta was a pivotal four-month conflict between the Knights of the Order of St John and Ottoman Empire forces sent by Suleiman the Magnificent, when the Ottoman Empire attempted to capture Malta and remove the protection of the Knights Hospitaller. The defenders of the Order of St John numbered about 500 knights and 6,000 soldiers, all of whom were Christians. The Ottoman forces numbered 40,000.

Imagine a group of 6500 Christian soldiers on the island with no water, no supplies for food or medical care, no reinforcements, and resisting a four-month siege by the Ottoman Empire's 40,000-strong army.

We know the Knights' prayers played a critical role. Outnumbered by the Ottoman forces, the Knights of St John and Maltese civilians relied heavily on divine intercession, believing that their survival depended as much on spiritual faith as on military strategy.

The Lord Jesus promised His disciples through today's Gospel, and it is also to the Knights of St. John, and it is also to us today. That is "*if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.*" (Matthew 18:19-20) Their ultimate victory over their enemies was underpinned by their faith and prayers. The victory marked a critical halt to Ottoman expansion in the Mediterranean.

The history of the Great Siege of Malta shows us that when we turn our hearts to God our Saviour Jesus Christ, Jesus will be our Defender and Saviour whatever the situation.

Today, through the scriptures, we learn the importance of reconciling our differences in the Church community and about the power of prayer.

Let us pray to the Lord Jesus Christ that our Heavenly Father's Kingdom will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.