



Encountering Christ
Prayerfully preparing for the
Sunday Mass and praying in
particular for our school families



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 16th September 2018 - The Twenty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Relax & Remember

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 Read

Taken from the Gospel for 16th September 2018 (Mark 8:27-35): Peter's Declaration of Faith and Jesus' Reply

Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he put this question to his disciples, "Who do people say I am?" And they told him. "John the Baptist," they said, "others Elijah; others again, one of the prophets." "But you," he asked, "who do you say I am?" Peter spoke up and said to him, "You are the Christ." And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. But, turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said to him, "Get behind me, Satan! Because the way you think is not God's way but man's." He called the people and his disciples to him and said, "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it."



3 Reflect

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

This is the turning-point of Mark's gospel. Till now the stories we have heard have all spoken about ever-increasing wonder and amazement at Jesus' personality, his goodness and his authority. But even his closest disciples do not seem to have seen what this means. Then suddenly Peter comes to the realisation that Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed of God, for whom everyone was waiting. However, Peter still does not understand what this implies. Jesus is not a conquering political hero, who will simply wipe out all opposition by overwhelming force, and make every path smooth and gentle. Jesus begins to show his disciples that the road to fulfilment is through suffering. Jesus repeats this prophecy of his suffering, death and resurrection another two times, and on each occasion the disciples fail to grasp the lesson; first it's Peter, then the disciples who are arguing about precedence, and finally the two sons of Zebedee who want the best places for themselves. So three times Jesus repeats that if you want to follow him you must follow him to the Cross. Nor are we, later followers of Jesus, any quicker than the first disciples to learn this lesson if we greet any suffering that comes our way with indignation and evasion.

Why does Jesus rebuke Peter so fiercely?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



**The Wednesday Word is under the patronage of St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church
Within the tradition of the Catholic Church, each Wednesday is dedicated to St Joseph**

WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 16th September 2018



First Reading: *The Servant of the Lord*

Isaiah 50:5-9

The Lord has opened my ear. For my part, I made no resistance; neither did I turn away. I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle. The Lord comes to my help, so that I am untouched by the insults. So, too, I set my face like flint; I know I shall not be shamed. My vindicator is here at hand. Does anyone start proceedings against me? Then let us go to court together. Who thinks he has a case against me? Let him approach me. The Lord is coming to my help: who dare condemn me?

As we have noted, this week's Gospel reading is a turning-point and concentrates on two matters, on Jesus as Messiah and on how the Messiah must suffer and die. This reading from Isaiah relates to the second aspect of the Gospel (the suffering Messiah). This part of the prophecies of Isaiah contains four interrelated "songs" sung by a Servant of the Lord, who willingly undergoes suffering and humiliation for his ministry to the Lord. Jesus' own sayings on service and suffering show that he was aware of these songs, and that he saw himself as this Servant of the Lord: 'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve'. We find a correspondence between many details from the songs and the story of the Passion: the flogging, the mockery and the insult, and also Jesus' voluntary failure to resist or to defend himself – at each trial he amazes the 'judge' by his silence. At the same time these songs are marked by a confidence in the Lord: whatever happens, the Lord will not desert his faithful Servant. In the fourth song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12) the suffering and humiliation of the Servant lead to his eventual vindication and the triumph of God.

How is this reading echoed in the story of Jesus' Passion?

Second Reading: *Faith and Works*

James 2:14-18

Take the case, my brothers, of someone who has never done a single good act but claims that he has faith. Will that faith save him? If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, "I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty," without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead. This is the way to talk to people of that kind: "You say you have faith and I have good deeds; I will prove to you that I have faith by showing you my good deeds - now you prove to me that you have faith without any good deeds to show."

“Carry on God's work of divine generosity and forgiveness.”

The interconnection between faith and good works has been a puzzle from the beginning of Christianity – and before. At times people seem to have believed that it was possible to earn salvation. However, you cannot bargain or negotiate with God. As the psalms say, 'No one can buy their own ransom.' What we must do is trust in God's promises and in his limitless forgiveness. Faith is not a matter of believing first one doctrine and then another. Primarily, it is a matter of where my trust and confidence is lodged. What, then, is the point of good works? Our faith in God's generosity and forgiveness should lead us to act with similar generosity and forgiveness. We are made in the image of God, to carry on God's work (of divine generosity and forgiveness). When James says that otherwise our faith is dead, he really means that it is a withered faith which is not faith at all.

What sort of "works" do we do that show our faith and reveal God to others?

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*
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