



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 30th September 2018 - The Twenty Sixth 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 30th September 2018 (Mark 9:38-43. 45. 47-48): Helps and Hindrances

John said to Jesus, “Master, we saw a man who is not one of us casting out devils in your name; and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him.” But Jesus said, “You must not stop him: no one who works a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us. If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink just because you belong to Christ, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward. But anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone round his neck. And if your hand should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life crippled, than to have two hands and go to hell, into the fire that cannot be put out. And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye should cause you to sin, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell where their worm does not die nor their fire go out.”



3 Reflect

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

This part of Mark’s Gospel is a collection of sayings about following the Lord, and in this Gospel we are presented with a rich insight into two distinct areas of discipleship. The first little story tells us that we must accept good wherever we can find it, not only in our own group and where we expect it to be. It is the same lesson that is presented in this Sunday’s first reading. The Spirit of God is at work not only in Catholics, not only in Christians, not only even in explicit believers. As the Second Vatican Council taught so strongly, the Holy Spirit is at work too in those who are seeking the Kingdom under signs and symbols. They can even be better people and better Christians than we who sometimes rely too comfortably on our membership of Christ’s Church! Secondly, the gospel provides some striking and urgent sayings about ‘obstacles’, literally trip-stones which makes people fall over. These vivid and dire warnings are about leading other believers into evil and about the trip-stones in ourselves, the disordered desires, that lead us into evil. Jesus’ sayings here must be taken with the utmost seriousness – but not literally (Jesus is speaking graphically to make us listen, and is not advocating self-mutilation!).

What are the qualities of the Kingdom that we need to become models of Christ for other peoples?

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 30th September 2018



First Reading: *Openness to the Spirit*

Numbers 11:25-29

The Lord came down in the Cloud. He spoke with Moses, but took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the spirit came on them they prophesied, but not again. Two men had stayed back in the camp; one was called Eldad and the other Medad. The spirit came down on them; though they had not gone to the Tent, their names were enrolled among the rest. These began to prophesy in the camp. The young man ran to tell this to Moses, "Look," he said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." Then said Joshua the son of Nun, who had served Moses from his youth, "My Lord Moses, stop them!" Moses answered him, "Are you jealous on my account? If only the whole people of the Lord were prophets, and the Lord gave his Spirit to them all!"

This is a curious little scene, and the corresponding scene in the gospel is no less curious. It is part of the story of Israel's wanderings in the desert. Moses' father-in-law wisely suggests that Moses should appoint assistants to deal with all the complaints, quarrels and lawsuits among the people. So some of the divine spirit of judgment which was on Moses now descends upon these seventy elders. However, there seems to have been some sort of irregularity in the appointment of Eldad and Medad, which leads to objections even from Joshua, Moses' faithful servant and successor. Nevertheless, the message finally given is that the Spirit of God is to be welcomed wherever it may be found. This story is a valuable reminder that the Spirit of God is greater than human regulations and limitations, and that the Spirit crosses human boundaries. The wisdom of God may be found outside the Church; genuine holiness may there too. We must respect the freedom of God to give what he wills where he wills it, and we must always be open to learn from those who do not belong to our own tradition.

Where are true holiness and wisdom found?

Second Reading: *The Dangers of Wealth*

James 5:1-6

An answer for the rich. Start crying; weep for the miseries that are coming to you. Your wealth is all rotting; your clothes are all eaten up by moths. All your gold and your silver are corroding away, and the same corrosion will be your own sentence, and eat into your body. It was a burning fire that you stored up as your treasure for the last days. Labourers mowed your fields, and you cheated them - listen to the wages that you kept back, calling out; realise that the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. On earth you have had a life of comfort and luxury; in the time of slaughter you went on eating to your heart's content. It was you who condemned the innocent and killed them; they offered you no resistance.

“Wealth can blind the wealthy to the needs and susceptibilities of others.”

This final reading from the Letter of James is a denunciation of the selfishness of the rich; it is in the style of the Old Testament prophets and contains a wealth of daunting imagery. This strength of expression is somewhat surprising in the early decades of Christianity, for it seems that wealth was not one of the temptations which seduced the early Christians. There do seem to have been rich Christians in the community at Corinth, but on the whole the Christians seem to have belonged to the lower classes and slaves. James, the presumed author of the letter, was the leader of the Jerusalem community. The Church at Jerusalem seems to have been in chronic financial difficulty: Paul was asked to help it out, and took a collection from the gentile Churches to Jerusalem. In the early second century the pagan Celsus denounces Christians as ignorant and ill-educated, but he does not denounce them for their wealth. However, these warnings from the author of our letter are still relevant today. It is still tempting to ease cash-flow by postponing payment of bills! The power and immunity given by wealth can still have a corrosive influence which blinds the wealthy to the needs and susceptibilities of others.

Is wealth necessarily a distraction from our true goals as followers of Christ?

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