



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 18th August 2019 - The Twentieth 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 18th August 2019 (Luke 12:49-53): Fire to the Earth

Jesus said to his disciples: "I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! There is a baptism I must still receive, and how great is my distress till it is over!

Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on a household of five will be divided: three against two and two against three; the father divided against the son, son against father, mother against daughter, daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

3 Reflect

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

What is this? Jesus came to bring peace and harmony, to perfect the unity of society and families. How is it then that he can here say exactly the opposite? And without apology! There is no, 'I am afraid there may sometimes be disagreements in the family'. Rather, 'I have come to bring disagreements in the family'. To make things worse, in Judaism the family is the basic unit which sticks together through thick and thin. Any Jew will be thoroughly shocked by this passage. We have seen repeatedly that Jesus' statements are often fierce and extreme: 'If your hand causes you to fall, cut it off'; 'Let the dead bury their dead'. Elsewhere he says 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven' – and the traditional let-out clause that he is talking about a small gate in Jerusalem is simply wrong; there was no such gate! Jesus is teaching that the most sacred earthly ties are less important than loyalty to the Lord. He chooses the family as an example deliberately because it is so sacred and important, but even so, following Jesus who leads us into all truth is more important still.

What are the hardest circumstances in which you have to make decisions for or against the demands of Jesus?

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.**



WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 18th August 2019



First Reading: *Jeremiah in the Well*

Jeremiah 38:4-6. 8-10

The king's leading men spoke to the king. "Let Jeremiah be put to death: he is unquestionably disheartening the remaining soldiers in the city, and all the people too, by talking like this. The fellow does not have the welfare of this people at heart so much as its ruin." "He is in your hands as you know," King Zedekiah answered, "for the king is powerless against you." So they took Jeremiah and threw him into the well of Prince Malchiah in the Court of the Guard, letting him down with ropes. There was no water in the well, only mud, and into the mud Jeremiah sank. Ebed-melech came out from the palace and spoke to the king. "My lord king," he said, "these men have done a wicked thing by treating the prophet Jeremiah like this: they have thrown him into the well where he will die." At this the king gave Ebed-melech the Cushite the following order: "Take three men with you from here and pull the prophet Jeremiah out of the well before he dies."

The prophet Jeremiah was a peaceable person, whose mission was to threaten the people of Jerusalem with destruction by the might of the approaching Babylonian armies. Their only hope lay not in military efficiency and power or in alliance with foreign nations, but in fidelity to the Lord. This was not the only message he had to give, for he also foretold that the Exile would bring a new covenant and forgiveness of sin as they repented their infidelities in exile and returned to the Lord. In any case, he tried to escape this mission by pretending to God that he had a stutter, but the Lord told him to quit pretending and get on with the job. The King systematically tore up his prophecies as they were read out, sheet by sheet, but at the same time he had a nasty, sinking feeling that Jeremiah was right. However, his military personnel overruled him and silenced Jeremiah by dumping him in the mud at the bottom of an underground water-storage tank. This reading is chosen to pair with the gospel reading, and so to teach that the message of fidelity to the Lord and to Christ is bound to be a sign of contradiction and to provoke opposition.

Jeremiah promised that the Lord would write his Law on the hearts of the people (see chapter 31 verse 33). What did he mean?

Second Reading: *Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our Faith*

Hebrews 12:1-4

With so many witnesses in a great cloud on every side of us, we too, then, should throw off everything that hinders us, especially the sin that clings so easily, and keep running steadily in the race we have started. Let us not lose sight of Jesus who leads us in our faith and brings us to perfection: for the sake of the joy which was still in the future, he endured the cross, disregarding the shameful of it, and from now on has taken his place at the right of God's throne. Think of the way he stood such opposition from sinners and then you will not give up for want of courage. In the fight against sin, you have not yet had to keep fighting to the point of death.

“With Jesus a whole new dimension of faith is revealed.”

Last Sunday's reading from Hebrews celebrated a long procession of figures from the Old Testament who had been sustained by their faith through difficulties and disappointments. This 'great crowd of witnesses' had kept their faith alive heroically on their pilgrimage towards the goal of a 'heavenly' homeland (Hebrews 11:16). The supreme figure, of course, is Jesus, who disregarded the shame of the Cross, and so has taken his seat on the throne of God. With Jesus a whole new dimension of faith is revealed. Our translation says of Jesus that he 'leads us in our faith' and 'brings us to perfection': these are two words in Greek often translated as 'pioneer' and 'perfecter'; they are carefully chosen to express the beginning and the completion of our faith. The former means that he set our faith in motion and led from the front, not merely a leader but an initiator, without whom it never would have happened. What is meant by 'perfecter'? Jesus brought it all to completion. It is the same word-stem as occurs in Jesus' last word on the Cross in John, 'It is complete'. What is complete? The life of Jesus? Jesus' own work? The first Christian community, formed from Mary and the Beloved Disciple? The plan of God? The promises of scripture? None of these can be excluded, for in each of these senses Jesus is the completion.

In what way is our faith different from the faithful men and women of the Old Testament?

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