



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 23rd August 2020 - The Twenty First Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Relax & Remember

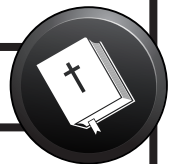
Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this 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 Sunday 23rd August 2020 - Jesus Claims Peter as Rock (Matthew 16:13-20)

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said, 'the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.' Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.



3 Reflect

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

At last Peter recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ. At last he realizes that in Jesus he can see the action of God made visible. The disciples followed Jesus as soon as he called, but for a long time they were puzzled about what to make of him, of his wonderful teaching and his godlike personality. Now comes a shaft of light and understanding. We too often take some time to appreciate the true worth of someone we know well: a little gesture can sometimes reveal just how generous and thoughtful they are. Peter suddenly grasps that here is the Son of God, acting among them, a daunting or even terrifying thought. Jesus replies to Peter's recognition with his own generosity, giving him a new name, 'Rock', for this is what 'Peter' means. If you name something, you make it your own, take it to yourself. This is just what Jesus does with Simon who becomes his own Peter, his own 'Rock'. That is the importance of the naming of a child at Baptism: Jesus takes us to himself and we become his. The early Christians called themselves 'Those over whom the name of Jesus has been called'. We may have been named Mary or John, but the name of Jesus has been called over us and we have become his.

What are the implications for us of Jesus' promise to Peter?

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 23rd August 2020



First Reading: *The Master of the Palace*

Isaiah 22:19-23

Thus says the Lord of hosts to Shebna, the master of the palace: 'I dismiss you from your office, I remove you from your post, and the same day I call on my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiah. I invest him with your robe, gird him with your sash, entrust him with your authority; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the House of Judah. I place the key of the House of David on his shoulder; should he open, no one shall close, should he close, no one shall open. I drive him like a peg into a firm place; he will become a throne of glory for his father's house.'

This reading from Isaiah is chosen to pair with the gospel reading about the appointment of Peter, for there Peter is appointed as head of Jesus' own team. In this first reading Isaiah predicts that Eliakim will take the place of Shebna as master of the king's palace in Jerusalem and that God will invest him with authority. In Isaiah's time, to open and close the doors of the palace was the privilege of the master of the place. To the Hebrew mind such a pair of opposites often signifies everything in-between them, so that opening and closing the doors means having control of everything that goes on; no one else may interfere. Similarly by the pair of opposites 'binding' and 'loosing', Peter is given total authority over the assembly or community of Jesus that is the Church. Equivalently, as Eliakim is given the key of the palace on his shoulder (or, as we would say, round his neck), so Peter is given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Peter is sometimes pictured as the doorkeeper of heaven, but 'the kingdom of heaven' is far wider: it means 'God's sovereignty', which Jesus came to establish on earth, in which all obey, worship and give glory to God.

How does Eliakim's role as master of the palace help us to understand the role of St Peter in the Church?

Second Reading: *God's Wisdom and Knowledge*

Romans 11:33-36

How rich are the depths of God - how deep his wisdom and knowledge - and how impossible to penetrate his motives or understand his methods! Who could ever know the mind of the Lord? Who could ever be his counsellor? Who could ever give him anything or lend him anything? All that exists comes from him; all is by him and for him. To him be glory for ever! Amen.

“Everything begins and ends in God.”

After his long and thorough exposition of the way in which the work of Christ won our salvation and how, by his loving obedience, Jesus wiped away the proud sin of Adam's disobedience, Paul has been agonizing in his letter to the Romans about how the Jews can have failed to recognize this fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham. Quoting one passage of scripture after another Paul finally comes to the conclusion that in the end, in God's good time, a remnant of Israel will be saved. How this will be he really cannot explain. Throwing up his hands in incomprehension, he can only burst into this wonderful hymn of praise to God's inscrutable Wisdom. We simply cannot understand God's plans and methods. This concluding passage in Romans is reminiscent of the wonderful passage at the end of the Book of Job. Job has rejected the shallow explanations for his sufferings suggested by his friends, when God intervenes to show Job how mighty and wise he is. Job can only admit that God's Wisdom surpasses anything human beings can conceive, and God's might infinitely transcends any human power. So Paul willingly grants that God must run his own world, and we cannot even attempt to challenge God's reasoning, for everything begins and ends in God.

How do we begin to make sense of God's ways?

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