



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 3rd February 2019 - The 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 Sunday 3rd February 2019 - The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth (Luke 4:21-30)

Jesus began to speak in the synagogue, "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen." And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips. They said, "This is Joseph's son, surely?" But he replied, "No doubt you will quote me the saying, 'Physician, heal yourself' and tell me, 'We have heard all that happened in Capernaum; do the same here in your own countryside'." And he went on, "I tell you solemnly, no prophet is ever accepted in his own country. There were many widows in Israel, I can assure you, in Elijah's day, when heaven remained shut for three years and six months and a great famine raged throughout the land, but Elijah was not sent to any one of these: he was sent to a widow at Zarephath, a Sidonian town. And in the prophet Elisha's time there were many lepers in Israel, but none of these was cured, except the Syrian, Naaman." When they heard this everyone in the synagogue was enraged. They sprang to their feet and hustled him out of the town; and they took him up to the brow of the hill their town was built on, intending to throw him down the cliff, but he slipped through the crowd and walked away.

3 Reflect

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

The reaction of the villagers of Nazareth to Jesus' proclamation of good news for the poor, the handicapped and disadvantaged is predictable. We have all suffered from failure of our own people to recognise our talents! In this case it is also fuelled by a paradoxical jealousy: in the moment of rejecting Jesus' message the villagers also want to reap the advantage of his miraculous healings. The rejection of Jesus by his own people provokes Luke to develop Jesus' teaching beyond that given by Mark or Matthew in their gospels: in Luke Jesus quotes instances which show God's care for those outside his traditional 'chosen people'. God's love is universal, not limited by ethnic or any other boundaries. The Chosen People were chosen not so that they would selfishly emphasise how special they were to God, but so that salvation might be brought to the whole world. In the same way, in Christ's New Dispensation, his people (the Church) are chosen not just to enjoy God's benefits and love for themselves, but to be the instruments of his love for all. This is the same message as that of Paul in today's second reading: true love has no limits. Luke is especially aware that Jesus sends his message beyond the limits of the Chosen People. Each of us has been chosen not for our own advantage but as an instrument to bring Christ to others.

What does it mean to be one of God's 'chosen' people?

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 3rd February 2019

First Reading: *The Prophet Rejected*

Jeremiah 1:4-5. 17-19

In the days of Josiah, the word of the Lord was addressed to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I have appointed you as prophet to the nations. So now brace yourself for action. Stand up and tell them all I command you. Do not be dismayed at their presence, or in their presence I will make you dismayed. I, for my part, today will make you into a fortified city, a pillar of iron and a wall of bronze to confront all this land: the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests and the country people. They will fight against you but shall not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you - it is the Lord who speaks."

Jeremiah was given a tough assignment. His task was to proclaim doom to his fellow-citizens under the threat of invasion by the overwhelming might of Babylon. Unless they returned to God and put their trust in the Lord rather than in their own feeble manoeuvrings they were doomed to slaughter and exile. To stop the people hearing this message their leaders arrested him and dumped him in the squelchy mud of an almost-empty well, and fed him on one loaf a day. It is only too human to block out the message one does not want to hear. So, while Jeremiah steadfastly held his ground, Babylon advanced, destroyed the city and Temple of Jerusalem, and led the people into exile. Bruised in exile, they learnt the hard way. As Jeremiah put it, God took from them the heart of stone and gave them a heart of flesh, to respond not just as a nation, but individually in tenderness and love. Jeremiah's steadfast preaching in the face of opposition is presented to us as a preparation for that of Jesus, which we hear in today's gospel reading.

Which parts of Jesus' teaching do we find hard to hear and act on?

Second Reading: *Authentic Love*

1 Corinthians 13:4-13 (shorter version)

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. Love does not come to an end. But if there are gifts of prophecy, the time will come when they must fail; or the gift of languages, it will not continue for ever; and knowledge - for this, too, the time will come when it must fail. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will disappear. When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and think like a child, and argue like a child, but now I am a man, all childish ways are put behind me. Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror; but then we shall be seeing face to face. The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known. In short, there are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.

The Christians of Corinth saw that they had a variety of gifts and talents. Paul gladly admits this. He only complains that this led them to squabbling and rivalry, for they were blind to the reasons for which these gifts had been given. Like all our talents, and especially those of interpersonal relationships, they were given by the Spirit which gives life to the Christian community. Their ultimate purpose is not to puff up the holder of the gift but to build up the community. The gift must be applied and exercised in love, for love is the highest gift of all gifts. Love alone builds the community. Paul goes on to paint a picture of what real love is. Few of us can read or listen to this text without realising our own failures and selfishness, as Paul puts his finger on one after another of our own weaknesses. This passage acts as a testing-ground of whether our love is genuine or whether we are merely deceiving ourselves. The final part of Paul's argument is also encouraging, not merely because of the durability and long-lasting nature of love, but also from the picture of heaven it conveys: in the perfect maturity, to which we look forward, there will be nothing left but love.

How does Paul's teaching on love challenge our own way of loving?

“Love is the highest gift of all gifts.
Love alone builds the community.”

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*
w: www.wednesdayword.org e: info@wednesdayword.org