



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 6th September 2020 - The Twenty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Relax & Remember

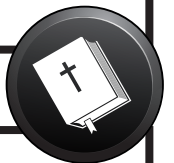
Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this 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 6th September 2020 - Reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-20)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven. I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.'



3 Reflect

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

The Church has had to be selective as we work through the Gospel of Matthew for this year's readings. In this eighteenth chapter of Matthew on relationships within the community it is striking that the Church has chosen this passage to put before us. The first part is all about sorting out disputes and about forgiveness. Despite the presence of Christ in the Christian community there are going to be disagreements and misunderstandings in every church and every family. The vital thing is to sort them out and not to let them fester. So here we are given a safe process to do this. Just after today's passage, Jesus underlines his teaching here when he says that we have to forgive not just seven times (the perfect number) but seventy-seven times. That means again and again and again, without limit. Christ also reminds us that he is present always in his community. The same promise is given at the beginning (the name Emmanuel means 'God with us') and at the end of the gospel ('I am with you to the end of time'). Therefore the decisions of the community will be considered binding in the sight of God. It is especially striking that the same pledge (of binding and loosing) is made with the Church here as had earlier been made with Peter himself; Peter on his own exercises the authority of the Church.

How may we best put this process of reconciliation described by Jesus into practice?

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 6th September 2020



First Reading: *Repentance for Sin*

Ezekiel 33:7-9

The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows, 'Son of man, I have appointed you as sentry to the House of Israel. When you hear a word from my mouth, warn them in my name. If I say to a wicked man, "Wicked wretch, you are to die", and you do not speak to warn the wicked man to renounce his ways, then he shall die for his sin, but I will hold you responsible for his death. If, however, you do warn a wicked man to renounce his ways and repent, and he does not repent, then he shall die for his sin, but you yourself will have saved your life.'

Why did the church choose this passage, about the prophet warning sinners, to pair with the gospel-reading about reconciliation? Partly because every person's sin or failure affects the whole Church. If I fail in my duty to my brother or sister or spouse or child or other dependent, this harms the holiness of the whole Church. I can't shrug it off as no concern of mine, saying, 'I can't be bothered', 'too busy', 'nothing to do with me, anyway'. Of course it is all very well for the prophet Ezekiel to point out other people's faults: that is the job of a prophet, to show others how God sees them. Heaven forbid that I should go round telling people their faults! On the other hand, just occasionally I can learn some home-truths about myself when someone flies off the handle; that is the time to listen and learn! Jesus did not denounce sinners: he dined with them. For myself, there are countless people and occasions where a healing word, a healing touch, can begin the process of growth over the scar-tissue. But it must be a healing in love, and, unless there is real, overflowing love, keep clear!

How may we best tell the truth in love?

Second Reading: *The Debt of Mutual Love*

Romans 13:8-10

Avoid getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love. If you love your fellow men you have carried out your obligations. All the commandments: You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and so on, are summed up in this single command: You must love your neighbour as yourself. Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour; that is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments.

“The only debt I owe to anyone is love.”

Paul has described the process of salvation, won for us by Christ's loving obedience to his Father. Now he gives his instructions about how we should live as Christians and he simply summarises the basic command of Judaism: love your neighbour as yourself. Each of these negative commandments he mentions contains a clutch of positive values. If I really love and bond with my spouse, it will never come to adultery. 'You shall not kill' implies also that we should further life in all the ways we can. 'You shall not steal' involves respect for the property and well-being of others. The only debt I owe to anyone is love. It is easy to kid ourselves that we are practising love, when in fact we are demonstrating self-interest, self-justification. It is easy enough to be loving to our friends (most of the time!), but that is not what Paul means. In his earlier letter to the Corinthians he gave us that searching test for true love, 'Love is always patient, never jealous, not boastful or conceited, never rude, never seeks its own advantage,' and so on. It is hard to read St Paul's teaching about these qualities of love without some embarrassment.

What does it mean to love your neighbour as yourself?

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