



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 7th April 2019 - The Fifth Sunday in Lent

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 7th April 2019 - The Woman Taken in Adultery (John 8:1-11)

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and, as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, "Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?" They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, "If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again. When they heard this, they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. He looked up and said, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she replied. "Neither do I condemn you," said Jesus. "Go away, and don't sin any more."



3 Reflect

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

Why this reading from John in the middle of the Year of Luke? All the other gospels during this Lenten season have been from Luke. The answer is that it is an independent, floating story which does not even fit into the Gospel of John. In early manuscripts of the gospels this story moves around and is found in various places before it becomes anchored as an example of Jesus' teachings just after he says, 'Our Law does not allow us to pass judgement on anyone without first giving them a hearing' (John 7:51). It is appropriate for this Year of Luke because the tone of the story and the theme of welcome for the repentant sinner are both thoroughly Lukan, a theme which is constantly stressed in Luke's Gospel (for example, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son). What did Jesus write on the ground, or was it that he was just doodling to allow the accusers time to reflect on their self-righteousness? The latter is certainly one of the main concerns of St Luke's Gospel, where it is made clear that you cannot be a follower of Christ without first admitting your sinfulness: when Peter meets Jesus, he tells Jesus to go away, because he (Peter) is a sinner; Zacchaeus recognises that he is a sinner and promises to make multiple restitution for his embezzlements; the woman at the supper weeps for her sins at Jesus' feet.

Why do you think Jesus wrote on the ground? Do I find myself judging others too quickly and too often?

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 7th April 2019



First Reading: *The New Exodus*

Isaiah 43:16-21

Thus says the Lord, who made a way through the sea, a path in the great waters, who put chariots and horse in the field and a powerful army, which lay there never to rise again, snuffed out, put out like a wick: "No need to recall the past, no need to think about what was done before. See, I am doing a new deed, even now it comes to light; can you not see it? Yes, I am making a road in the wilderness, paths in the wilds. The wild beasts will honour me, jackals and ostriches, because I am putting water in the wilderness (rivers in the wild) to give my chosen people drink. The people I have formed for myself will sing my praises.

During Lent we have been working through the story of Israel preparing – or being prepared – for the coming of Christ: we have heard of Adam, Abraham, Moses, the monarchy, and now we hear of the promise of a new beginning. For that is what Easter is. This part of Isaiah was written during the Exile of the Jews in Babylon, a traumatic event which seemed to them to be the end of all their hopes; it seemed to be permanent condition of exile and slavery, far from their beloved Jerusalem - 'There we sat and wept,' says the Psalmist. But the prophet (whose work is attributed to Isaiah) set out to re-invigorate them with the promise that they would return to Jerusalem, and that the wonders of the Exodus from Egypt would be renewed. There would be a new road across the desert and miraculous supplies of water for the travellers. The desert would bloom afresh (for the slightest supply of water brings the withered plants to life in the spring), and the curious beasts of the desert, jackals and ostriches, would praise the Lord. There is a lesson for us too. Our trust in God teaches us – and our own experience eventually grudgingly reinforces this – that seemingly total disaster can become a source of strength and instruction.

In what way would you wish to be transformed by the new beginning of Easter?

Second Reading: *Pushing Ahead for Olympic Gold*

Philippians 3:8-14

I believe nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For him I have accepted the loss of everything, and I look on everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ and be given a place in him. I am no longer trying for perfection by my own efforts, the perfection that comes from the Law, but I want only the perfection that comes through faith in Christ, and is from God and based on faith. All I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death. That is the way I can hope to take my place in the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have become perfect yet: I have not yet won, but I am still running, trying to capture the prize for which Christ Jesus captured me. I can assure you my brothers, I am far from thinking that I have already won. All I can say is that I forget the past and I strain ahead for what is still to come; I am racing for the finish, for the prize to which God calls us upwards to receive in Christ Jesus.

As we prepare for the celebration of the Passion next week, we read of Paul's own struggle in this letter to his special friends at Philippi in Northern Greece. He is tired, probably already quite elderly, and longs to finish his race and be with Christ in tranquillity. The games and athletic contests were the football tournaments of the ancient world. Corinth, where Paul spent so long, was the centre for the Isthmian Games (more important at the time than the Olympics) and Paul often uses imagery of running and even boxing. He knows the thrill of the contest, but at the same time he recognizes that all our power comes from the Resurrection of Christ. Christ endured and was raised by the Father. Often for us Christianity consists of also enduring – enduring slights, insults or neglect and replying with a cheerful word or gesture which dissolves the hurt and seeks to renew friendship and genuine relationship. There is no need aggressively to turn the other cheek; it needs more of the courage of Christ to reply with a positive advance. If I can bring myself to ask, 'What would Jesus have done?' I am already sharing in his strength. In this way, the aggression of the athlete is redirected!

Apart from his suffering and death, what do you find most inspiring about Jesus' life-story and his character as portrayed in the gospels?

“All our power comes from the Resurrection of Christ.”

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