



*Celebrating the Year of the Word
with The Wednesday Word.*

*Lectio Divina - prayerfully
preparing for the Sunday Mass.*



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 29th December 2019 - The Holy Family

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 29th December 2019 - The Flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15. 19-23)

After the wise men had left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him.' So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod was dead. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my son out of Egypt". After Herod's death, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you and go back to the land of Israel, for those who wanted to kill the child are dead.' So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, went back to the land of Israel. But when he learnt that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as ruler of Judaea he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he left for the region of Galilee. There he settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way the words spoken through the prophets were to be fulfilled: "He will be called a Nazarene".



3 *Reflect*

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

The flight into Egypt is a splendid gospel for the feast of the Holy Family. It tells of a time of the acutest danger, when Mary and Joseph must have been at their wits' end in caring for their precious child, and so were most bound together as an endangered family, and at their most reliant on God in a situation humanly hopeless. The powerful, resourceful and pitiless Herod was a formidable threat; he would have no scruples about killing a few male children in the little hill-town of Bethlehem. There is also a further dimension: on many occasions, and especially here, Matthew depicts Jesus as a Second Moses: from the beginning Herod threatens Jesus' life just as Pharaoh had threatened Moses' survival as a baby. Just as Moses went into exile after killing the Egyptian overseer, so Jesus also goes into exile, to return when the threat is past. Of both it is said, 'Those who wanted to kill you/the child are dead' (cf. Exodus 4:19). Later Jesus will be seen as the Second Moses when he stays forty days and nights fasting in the desert, and when he delivers the new Law at the Sermon on the Mount and at the Transfiguration.

What can you do to bind your family more closely together in Christ?

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 29th December 2019



First Reading: *Honour Your Father & Your Mother*

Ecclesiasticus 3:2-6. 12-14

The Lord honours the father in his children, and upholds the rights of a mother over her sons. Whoever respects his father is atoning for his sins; he who honours his mother is like someone amassing a fortune. Whoever respects his father will be happy with children of his own; he shall be heard on the day when he prays. Long life comes to him who honours his father; he who sets his mother at ease is showing obedience to the Lord. My son, support your father in his old age; do not grieve him during his life. Even if his mind should fail, show him sympathy; do not despise him in your health and strength; for kindness to a father shall not be forgotten but will serve as reparation for your sins.

The Book of Ecclesiasticus is a collection of wise instructions on how to behave in accordance with the Law. The author must have been an expert in the Law, living in Jerusalem. He sees the Law not as a tiresome set of rules to be obeyed, but as God's loving gift to his People, to show them how they should act to keep close to God. The Law is therefore to be treasured, a guide of inestimable value. The reading for today is a meditation and expansion on the commandment, 'Honour your father and your mother', explaining just how this should be put into practice. What was Jesus like as a baby? Did he cry? He must have done, to make his baby feelings known. Did he bawl and howl? Did he cry when he scraped the skin off his knees? Did he fall out of trees and break his arm? Did he make mistakes? Did he play pranks? He must have made jokes. He must have been a wonderful joy to his parents, loving, delightful company, full of the devastatingly simple wisdom of children. And they must have been loving, wonderful company for him too, an anchor of affection and security.

How do we honour father and mother in later life – and how do we honour children?

Second Reading: *The Overcoat of Love*

Colossians 3:12-21

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful. Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, give way to your husbands, as you should in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and treat them with gentleness. Children, be obedient to your parents always, because that is what will please the Lord. Parents, never drive your children to resentment or you will make them feel frustrated.

In an incredibly short space the Letter to the Colossians gives a whole series of instructions on living in community: compassion, forgiveness, love and peace – not to mention gratitude. Love is a sort of overcoat, holding all the other qualities together. If we reflect on these values and put them into practice there can be no rivalry or hostility in the Christian community – even within a family, where the strains of Christmas often make love grow thin. A loving family is the model for the different relationships of a loving Christian community. God's fatherhood and motherhood is the model for human parentage, and Christ's devotion to his body the Church is the model for the devotion of spouses to one another. Today's second reading begins with an inspiring reminder that we form the chosen people of God; God's choice leaves us little alternative but to behave as God's people. The paragraph ends with the counsel to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus; Christians are those over whom the name of the Lord Jesus has been uttered, making us members of his company and putting us under his power. This is the challenge for us, really to act as God's people.

Is it really possible to regard the Christian community as a family?

“The challenge for us is really to act as God's people.”

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