



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 31st October 2021 - The Thirty 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 31st October 2021 (Mark 12:28-34): The Great Commandment

One of the scribes came up to Jesus and put a question to him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." The scribe said to him, "Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true: that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice." Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to question him anymore.



3 Reflect

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

The basic command of Judaism, which should dominate all life, was love of God above all things. Jesus audaciously adds to this another commandment of the Old Testament, the love of neighbour. This is the only case in the gospels where a scribe positively approves Jesus. Why is this the case? The scribes were the experts in the Law and its interpretation. To stress the importance and the equality of the second commandment of love Jesus uses a technique of interpretation common and approved in Israel. If two passages of scripture have a parallel sentence structure and use similar words they may be closely associated. In these two commandments, and only here in the whole of the Bible, are the words used, 'And you shall love...' with a direct object. This enables Jesus to put the command to love neighbour on the same level as the command to love God – and the lawyer approves his interpretation. The first Letter of John puts it in this way: 'No one who fails to love the brother whom he can see can love God whom he has not seen.' This was, of course, not a new commandment; it was the equality of the two commandments of love which was new.

What sort of person do you find it most difficult to love?

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 31st October 2021

First Reading: 'Hear, O Israel'

Deuteronomy 6:2-6

Moses said to the people, "If you fear the Lord your God all the days of your life and if you keep all his laws and commandments which I lay on you, you will have a long life, you and your son and your grandson. Listen then, Israel, keep and observe what will make you prosper and give you great increase, as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you, giving you a land where milk and honey flow. Listen, Israel: The Lord our God is the one Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. Let these words I urge on you today be written on your heart."

This reading is very special: it is the command which rules Israel's life, and the life of every true Christian too. The faithful Jew recites this passage morning, noon and night, and in prayer carries the text literally before the eyes, on the hands and on the doorposts of the house, so that one is always aware of the most important loyalty in life. All this is a symbol that love of God must dominate our actions and thoughts; it must be always in our minds, and must be the guide for all our deeds and for our motivations. God is a God of love and tenderness of the heart, not a God of threats or compulsion. To serve God is a joy and happiness, bringing light and colour into our lives. If God is not in our lives and thoughts, we are the poorer for it, and lack not only truth but also the warmth of an unspeakable, personal friendship. The only difference which the New Testament brings, as St Paul explains, is that for Christians there is not merely one Lord God. For us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come.

What would life be like without God?

Second Reading: The Perfect High Priest

Hebrews 7:23-28

There used to be a great number of priests under the former covenant, because death put an end to each one of them; but this one, Christ, because he remains for ever, can never lose his priesthood. It follows then, that his power to save is utterly certain, since he is living for ever to intercede for all who come to God through him. To suit us, the ideal high priest would have to be holy, innocent and uncontaminated, beyond the influence of sinners, and raised up above the heavens; one who would not need to offer sacrifices every day, as the other high priests do for their own sins and then for those of the people, because he has done this once and for all by offering himself. The Law appoints high priests who are men subject to weakness; but the promise on oath, which came after the Law, appointed the Son who is made perfect for ever.

The pagan idea of sacrifice was to make reparation to a demanding and often angry god, to divert a capricious god from our own failings by flattery and gifts. The blood of the victim that was shed was a substitute for human blood, paying the price for a life which should have been forfeit. The Christian idea is entirely different. Christ is the perfect human being who is also divine, united to his Father in a perfect and permanent act of love. This reached its highest expression in the offering of his life in loving obedience, a loving obedience or loving embrace, accepted and vindicated by the Father in the Resurrection. It was not a barbaric act of paying a penalty which I should have paid, but a return in tender love to the Father, a return in which I may share. The Letter to the Hebrews, written for Christians of Jewish origin, makes clear that Christ's offering is the perfect fulfilment of all the objectives and devotion expressed in the rituals of the Temple.

How does our Christian understanding of sacrifice differ from a pagan understanding?

“The offering of his life in loving obedience.”

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