



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 7th November 2021 - The Thirty Second Sunday of 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 7th November 2021 (Mark 12:38-44): The Widow's Offering

In his teaching Jesus said, "Beware of the scribes who like to walk about in long robes, to be greeted obsequiously in the market squares, to take the front seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets; these are the men who swallow the property of widows, while making a show of lengthy prayers. The more severe will be the sentence they receive." He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the treasury, and many of the rich put in a great deal. A poor widow came and put in two small coins, the equivalent of a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "I tell you solemnly, this poor widow has put more in than all who have contributed to the treasury; for they have all put in money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on."



3 Reflect

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

We are presented in the gospel with a contrast between the dignitaries of the Temple, parading in their splendour, and the least of the least. These little coins of the widow are called lepta, meaning 'light', hardly more than shavings of copper, hardly worth picking up. Yet the value of a gift depends not on its absolute worth, but in the love with which it is given. The value of a birthday present depends on the love which it expresses, and the care which has gone into choosing or making it. One can imagine the widow debating with herself: if she made this supreme gift to the Lord, could she survive without these two little coins. What would she have to go without? As with the Sidonian widow in the first reading overleaf, this paltry gift is a rich expression of the widow's trust in divine love and care, and of her wanting to do something for the Lord. The little gift would go unnoticed among the riches of the exquisite and lavish Temple building, for its splendour was the wonder of the eastern Mediterranean, but her offering is a heartfelt expression of her love. Just so with our prayer of praise: it is the joyful outpouring of our love.

What gift could you give to the Lord?

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 7th November 2021



First Reading: *Elijah and the Widow*

1 Kings 17:10-16

Elijah the Prophet went off to Sidon. And when he reached the city gate, there was a widow gathering sticks; addressing her he said, "Please bring a little water in a vessel for me to drink." She was setting off to bring it when he called after her. "Please," he said, "bring me a scrap of bread in your hand." "As the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I have no baked bread, but only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug; I am just gathering a stick or two to go and prepare this for myself and my son to eat, and then we shall die." But Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid, go and do as you have said; but first make a little scone of it for me and bring it to me, and then make some for yourself and for your son. For thus the Lord speaks, the God of Israel: 'Jar of meal shall not be spent, jug of oil shall not be emptied, before the day when the Lord sends rain on the face of the earth.'" The woman went and did as Elijah told her and they ate the food, she, himself and her son. The jar of meal was not spent nor the jug of oil emptied, just as the Lord had foretold through Elijah.

This story about Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in Sidon is chosen to pair with the story in today's gospel about the generosity of the widow in the Temple. It is also, of course, about another widow's generosity, but this story is more fundamentally about her trust and obedience to the command of the prophet. In a way, trust in the Lord underpins all generosity: we trust that any real need we encounter is presented to us by the Lord, and is a request for our help; we trust that God, our Father, knows what he is doing. Realising that we are no more than stewards of God's good things, we respond to the need which God has presented to us. This story also has something special about it, for this widow in the territory of Sidon is mentioned in the manifesto-speech which Jesus makes in Luke's gospel in the synagogue of Nazareth: his mission is not confined to Israel any more than that of the prophets was. The gentiles too are the children of God, the object of his loving care, and are to be saved no less than the Jews. In Jesus' mission the gentiles form part of the Chosen People of God.

What in your life has really called you to place all your trust in God?

Second Reading: *Christ's Sacrifice Once and for All*

Hebrews 9:24-28

It is not as though Christ had entered a man-made sanctuary which was only modelled on the real one; but it was heaven itself, so that he could appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf. And he does not have to offer himself again and again, like the high priest going into the sanctuary year after year with the blood that is not his own, or else he would have had to suffer over and over again since the world began. Instead of that, he has made his appearance once and for all, now at the end of the last age, to do away with sin by sacrificing himself. Since men only die once, and after that comes judgement, so Christ, too, offers himself only once to take the faults of many on himself, and when he appears a second time, it will not be to deal with sin but to reward with salvation those who are waiting for him.

Addressed to Jewish priests converted to Christianity, this Letter to the Hebrews seeks to show them that the sacrifices they had formerly valued so much were only a shadow of the reality in Christ. There is no time in heaven! Those sacrifices were of their nature temporary and unsatisfying; Christ's is of its nature eternal and all sufficient. The image of Christ, presenting his sacrifice and his blood before the throne of God, is ultimately reassuring. It signifies the permanent and unbreakable union of humanity to God, welded by the obedience of Jesus on the Cross. Although the language is largely similar, the sacrifices of the Bible are not to be thought of in the same way as pagan and Greek sacrifices. They are not appeasing an angry god, but are celebrating unity with God. They are shared meals, and in the great annual sacrifice of the Day of Reconciliation, blood is sprinkled on people and altar to signify the renewed union with God. Especially reassuring is the mention of Christ's blood, for blood is the symbol of life. Christ's blood, given to us, is the sign and sacrament of the gift of divine life, offered to us – if only we will accept it.

What does Christ's self-offering signify?

“Christ's blood, given to us, is the sign and sacrament of the gift of divine life.”

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