



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 26th June 2022 - The Thirteenth 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 26th June 2022 (Luke 9:51-62): Uncompromising Discipleship

As the time drew near for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely took the road for Jerusalem and sent messengers ahead of him. These set out, and they went into a Samaritan village to make preparations for him, but the people would not receive him because he was making for Jerusalem. Seeing this, the disciples James and John said, 'Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to burn them up?' But he turned and rebuked them, and they went off to another village. As they travelled along they met a man on the road who said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus answered, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' Another to whom he said, 'Follow me,' replied, 'Let me go and bury my father first.' But he answered, 'Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.' Another said, 'I will follow you, sir, but first let me go and say good-bye to my people at home.' Jesus said to him, 'Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'



3 Reflect

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

As Jesus embarks on his great journey to his death at Jerusalem, the latter half of Luke's gospel is marked by Jesus' teaching on the difficulties and challenges of discipleship. Right at the beginning of this section Jesus teaches the little lesson that the disciples must not be surprised or take vengeance when they are rejected. Then three lessons follow on the uncompromising demands of discipleship. These are not 'counsels of perfection', but demanded of every disciple of Jesus. First, the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. The disciple has no right to creature comforts. Second (perhaps the most counter-cultural of all Jesus' demands), burying a dead father was regarded as a sacred duty, and yet not even this may stand in the way of a response to the call of Jesus. Third (a more rigorous condition than even Elijah demanded of Elisha), there must be no backward glance even to bid the family farewell. Not even the most sacred of natural ties may stand in the way of the demands of following Jesus. Jesus expresses his teaching with maximum vigour; these conditions may seem unfeeling and unacceptably harsh. This is partly the nature of the Semitic language (the Aramaic which Jesus spoke), which rarely uses a comparative, 'more than...' It is either day or night, no dusk! There are no half measures. We must beware of softening what remains hard.

Where does following Jesus currently fit on your list of priorities? Do any of your goals, activities, interests or desires for material comforts keep you from following Christ more closely? Is there anything that you wouldn't give up for 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 26th June 2022



First Reading: *The Call of Elisha*

1 Kings 19:16. 19-21

The Lord said the Elijah: 'Go, you are to anoint Elisha son of Shaphat, of Abel Meholah, as prophet to succeed you.' Leaving there, Elijah came on Elisha son of Shaphat as he was ploughing behind twelve yoke of oxen, he himself being with the twelfth. Elijah passed near to him and threw his cloak over him. Elisha left his oxen and ran after Elijah. 'Let me kiss my father and mother, then I will follow you,' he said. Elijah answered, 'Go, go back; for have I done anything to you?' Elisha turned away, took the pair of oxen and slaughtered them. He used the plough for cooking the oxen, then gave to his men, who ate. He then rose, and followed Elijah and became his servant.

This story is clearly chosen by the Church to pair with the latter part of the Gospel reading - or even possibly the reverse, for Jesus' call to the unnamed disciple seems to be modelled on Elijah's call to Elisha. Elisha must have been a rich man to have twelve yoke of oxen ploughing his field - a large field and a hefty herd. Elijah's gesture of throwing his mantle over Elisha is to claim Elisha as his own. When Elijah is taken up to heaven his mantle falls on Elisha again, giving him a double share of his spirit. By slaughtering the oxen and burning the tackle Elisha destroys his own livelihood, but he is allowed to take leave of his family before taking up the life of a prophet. Elijah was a fearless prophet of Israel, inspired by the vision of God (at the cave on Mount Horeb) and uncompromisingly defending the rights of God against idolatry (by the prophets of Baal) and injustice even by the king (appropriating Naboth's vineyard). Elijah was expected to come again to herald the final coming of God, and many saw him in John the Baptist. Elisha was perhaps more a political operator, furthering God's plans by the appointment of rulers.

Does Elijah think that Elisha is too slow to respond? Do you?

Second Reading: *Freedom to Love*

Galatians 5:1. 13-18

When Christ freed us, he meant us to remain free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. My brothers, you were called, as you know, to liberty; but be careful, or this liberty will provide an opening for self-indulgence. Serve one another, rather, in works of love, since the whole of the Law is summarised in a single command: Love your neighbour as yourself. If you go snapping at each other and tearing each other to pieces, you had better watch or you will destroy the whole community.

Let me put it like this: if you are guided by the Spirit you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence, since self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit, the Spirit is totally against such a thing, and it is precisely because the two are so opposed that you do not always carry out your good intentions. If you are led by the Spirit, no law can touch you.

“The Spirit is the life of Christ in us.”

Paul is still, as last Sunday, warning the Galatians against regarding themselves as bound by the Jewish Law. The Law, he teaches, is an external restriction, whereas Paul wants them to be led only by the interior Spirit of God, which will lead them in the paths of love. It is important to understand correctly the distinction between the flesh and the Spirit. The sins of the flesh are not merely 'carnal' sins like sex, greed and over-indulgence. They include also such things as rivalry, jealousy, quarrels and malice. So the 'flesh' is best defined as self-indulgence and lack of self-discipline, perhaps unrestrained natural desires. Natural desires are not in themselves evil, but they need to be harnessed and directed by the impetus of the Spirit. On the other hand, the Spirit is the life of Christ in us, and motivates everything that leads to Christ, not only - as Paul here lists - 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control', but also everything that builds up the community in love - loving guidance, teaching, the healing touch, as well as the more striking gifts like speaking in tongues. In 1 Corinthians he explains that each member of the community has a special gift, and all of these are needed for a healthy community.

**What gifts can you contribute to the life of your Christian community?
What gifts do you lack that you see in people around you?**

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