



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 23rd October 2022 - The Thirtieth 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 23rd October 2022 (Luke 18:9-14): The Pharisee and the Tax-Collector

Jesus spoke the following parable to some people who prided themselves on being virtuous and despised everyone else. "Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood there and said this prayer to himself, 'I thank you, God, that I am not grasping, unjust, adulterous like the rest of mankind, and particularly that I am not like this tax collector here. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all I get.' The tax collector stood some distance away, not daring even to raise his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast and said, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' This man, I tell you, went home again at rights with God; the other did not. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the man who humbles himself will be exalted."



3 Reflect

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

These two figures in today's Gospel are stock characters, sketched with Luke's brilliant wit and sensitivity. The gospels invariably give the Pharisees a bad press: after the destruction of Jerusalem they were the only surviving branch of Judaism and so, for the evangelists, they represent the vigorous opposition of Judaism to Christianity at that time. The Jewish historian, Josephus, paints a sympathetic picture of them, and Matthew's picture of them as the personification of hypocrisy may be a caricature of their scrupulosity concerning the observance of the Law. Jesus played them at their own game in his careful interpretation of scripture, presenting them with a rich and profound understanding of God's Word. The question must be asked: was Jesus a Pharisee too? Pre-occupation with exact observance of rules can often appear to outsiders as hypocrisy. In Jesus' time a tax-collector was the epitome of malpractice and the abandonment of all decent standards: he worked for the hated Roman occupying power; he had to make his own living by extorting excessive tax. So this parable is one more example of Jesus' reversal of expected values, and his outreach to those generally despised: to the woman notorious in the city as a sinner, to the woman taken in adultery, to Zacchaeus and to the 'good thief'. It beautifully fulfils the first reading, demonstrating that the prayer of the humble 'pierces the clouds'.

Take some moments to reflect on these words from the Gospel: "God be merciful to me, a sinner". Through these words, what is God saying to you?

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 23rd October 2022

First Reading: *The Prayer of the Humble*

Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 35:12-14. 16-19

The Lord is a judge who is no respecter of personages. He shows no respect of personages to the detriment of a poor man; he listens to the plea of the injured party. He does not ignore the orphan's supplication, nor the widow's as she pours out her story. The man who with his whole heart serves God will be accepted, his petitions will carry to the clouds. The humble man's prayer pierces the clouds; until it arrives he is inconsolable, nor will he desist until the Most High takes notice of him, acquits the virtuous and delivers judgement. And the Lord will not be slow, nor will he be dilatory on their behalf.

The Book of Sirach was translated into Greek by the grandson of the author. The grandfather wrote in Hebrew. He was a wise, witty and sometimes cynical teacher in Jerusalem, who gathered and built on the pithy sayings of the sages. The first part of this reading, about the widow's persistent appeal to the Lord, may well be the basis of last Sunday's parable of the persistent widow and the unjust judge. Did Jesus build his parable on this piece of wisdom of the ancients, or did Luke use the Book of Sirach to expand Jesus' teaching? So also the second part of the reading, which prepares us for today's parable of contrasting suppliants (proud and humble) in the Temple: did Jesus build on the ancients or did Luke? Jesus certainly heard and learnt from the holy books of Judaism. Whether Jesus directly used Sirach or not, the message of the two parts of this reading is clear in the phrase which joins them together: whoever whole-heartedly serves God will be accepted. There is no pretending in prayer. As a wise old priest once said to me, 'In prayer you can stop pretending to be Queen Victoria or a poached egg.'

**What does this reading from Sirach have to teach us about prayer?
What is the best short prayer you know?**

Second Reading: *Paul's Farewell*

2 Timothy 4:6-8. 16-18

My life is already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to be gone. I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith; all there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his Appearing. The first time I had to present my defence, there was not a single witness to support me. Every one of them deserted me - may they not be held accountable for it. But the Lord stood by me and gave me power, so that through me the whole message might be proclaimed for all the pagans to hear; and so I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from all evil attempts on me, and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This is the last Sunday reading from the 'Pastoral Letters', addressed to Paul's assistants, Timothy and Titus. Fittingly, it is a summing-up and defence of his mission, according to the literary conventions of the time. We do not know where the trial he mentions took place, nor the eventual outcome, though the tradition holds strong that he was martyred in Rome (and his severed head bounced three times, giving rise to three fountains, the famous 'Tre Fontane' in Rome). In his letters Paul several times mentions imprisonment, but nowhere a formal trial; so we can only guess. Did he set out on further journeys, even to Spain, after his confinement in Rome? We do not know. The sporting images of the 'good fight' and the 'race' are typical of Paul, and also the image of a libation, the first few drops from a cup of wine, offered in homage to a divinity. But most of all we are reminded that Paul had long yearned for death and to be fully united to his Lord and ours: 'Life to me, of course, is Christ, and death would be a positive gain' (Philippians 1:21), but he remained fully aware of the Lord's call to provide energetic guidance in the early Church.

Can you make any of Paul's self-defence your own?

“Be fully united to the Lord.”

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