



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 25th December 2022 - Christmas Day

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 25th December 2022 - The Birth of Jesus (Luke 2.1-14)

Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census - the first - took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first-born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn. In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing: 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to men who enjoy his favour'.



3 Reflect

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

The Gospel above (which we read at Midnight Mass) reminds us that the real point of Christmas is the birth of Jesus, God's gift to the world. Luke's account of the birth of Jesus stresses especially the poverty of the family: Christ comes to the poor and is greeted by the poor. Mary and Joseph are displaced persons, and can find no decent place for the baby to be born. There is no space in the living-quarters and he has to be put in a feeding-trough among the animals. He is greeted not by the rich presents of the magnificent wise men from the East, but by impoverished hired shepherds, guarding flocks in the winter night. He is born to be the patron of the homeless and of displaced persons.

But Jesus is also the fulfilment of the hopes of the Old Testament. The families both of John the Baptist and of Jesus are eminently faithful to the prescriptions of the Law, waiting for the salvation promised to Israel. In the Temple Jesus will be greeted by Simeon and Anna, the representatives of fidelity to the Old Law. The birth of Jesus at Bethlehem shows that he is born as the heir to the promises to David, that God would build David a house of everlasting sovereignty, whose king would be the Son of God and would call God his Father.

What does the Christmas story tell us about Jesus?

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 25th December 2022



First Reading: *The Heir of David*

Isaiah 9:1-7

The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. You have made their gladness greater, you have made their joy increase; they rejoice in your presence as men rejoice at harvest time, as men are happy when they are dividing the spoils. For the yoke that was weighing on him, the bar across his shoulders, the rod of his oppressor, these you break as on the day of Midian. For all the footgear of battle, every cloak rolled in blood, is burnt and consumed by fire. For there is a child born for us, a son given to us and dominion is laid on his shoulders; and this is the name they give him: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace. Wide is his dominion in a peace that has no end, for the throne of David and for his royal power, which he establishes and makes secure in justice and integrity. From this time onwards and for ever, the jealous love of the Lord of hosts will do this.

This prophecy of Isaiah promises a joyful reversal after the threats of the Assyrian invasion of Jerusalem in 732bc. The devastating Assyrian armies had plundered the northern kingdom of Israel and seemed certain to repeat this exploit on Judah and Jerusalem in the south. Amazingly, they turned away. At the same time Isaiah promises a son of the royal line of David who will bring peace with justice and righteousness. This son is described in elaborate terms which we Christians see to be fulfilled only in Jesus, the Second David, the true Son of God. He will be Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, each pair of titles having a marvellous, transcendent air. Such promises sustained the hopes of the nation of Israel through the grim period of the Exile and the succession of foreign rulers which dominated the return from Exile. Later, as the hated Roman occupation became more burdensome, the hopes of delivery through this promised heir of David became stronger and stronger for the people of Israel; we see this in the Jewish literature of the years immediately preceding the birth of Jesus. It is in the context of lively expectation of an "heir to David" and a "Son of God" that Mary received the message of the angel at the Annunciation.

In what way does Jesus fulfil these promises?

Second Reading: *The Appearing of the Saviour*

Titus 2:11-14

God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus. He sacrificed himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people so that it could be his very own and would have no ambition except to do good.

The author of the letter sees God primarily as the Saviour who wishes all people to be saved through Christ, who is also our Saviour. In the Old Testament God is often called the Saviour of his people, but in the letters to Timothy and Titus this title is with equal frequency transferred to Jesus our Saviour, perhaps as a divine title. This reading is chosen to celebrate Christmas because it speaks twice of the Appearing or manifestation (the same word in Greek) of our Saviour, and the Church Fathers often considered this Appearing to be at the Incarnation rather than the Resurrection. We celebrate the Appearing at the moment when God became man so that man might be raised to the divine. Accordingly, the Eastern Church celebrates rather the Epiphany (or Appearing) of the Lord. However the letter of Titus stresses that we must respond to this Appearing of the grace of God by preparing for the final Appearing. Thus the classic formulation speaks of the threefold coming of Christ: in history (at Bethlehem), in mystery (coming into our hearts) and in majesty (at the final coming in glory).

Is it possible or useful to locate salvation at one particular historical moment?

“God became man so that man might be raised to the divine.”

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

w: www.wednesdayword.org

e: info@wednesdayword.org