



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023 - The Fifth Sunday of Easter

**1** Relax & Remember

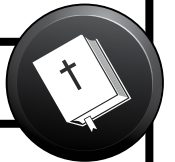
Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this 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 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023 - Jesus Warns of his Departure (John 14:1-12)**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house; if there were not, I should have told you. I am now going to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am you may be too. You know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus said: 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him.' Philip said, 'Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied.' 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip,' said Jesus to him, 'and you still do not know me? To have seen me is to have seen the Father, so how can you say, "Let us see the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing this work. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; believe it on the evidence of this work, if for no other reason. I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father.'



**3** Reflect

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

*As the festival of the Ascension approaches, Jesus begins to prepare his followers for his own departure from the world. There are two aspects to this teaching. Firstly Jesus speaks of the final purpose, union with the Father, and his preparation of a place for us there. He says that there is a 'room' for each of them, suggesting not that there are plenty of separate cubicles for different sets of people (bishops, babies, monks and maniacs), but that there is no lack of space in heaven. No problem of 'only one wins the prize' in this case. The second aspect is preparation for the future Church on earth, and the almost shocking promise that in the absence of Jesus – but in the strength of his Spirit – his people will do 'even greater works'. Paul teaches that believers 'make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ', for in every age the Church fills up the measure of Christ's sufferings; it is a Church which shares its Master's trials. In the same way in every age the Church must carry on the works of Christ. In John the 'works' of Jesus are the marvellous deeds, beyond mere human powers, which show who Jesus is. We too are called on to perform marvellous deeds, beyond mere human powers, works of grace and generosity.*

**What is the real joy and excitement of heaven? How may we best carry on the 'work' of 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 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023



## First Reading: *The Appointment of Deacons*

### Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7

About this time, when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenists made a complaint against the Hebrews: in the daily distribution their own widows were being overlooked. So the Twelve called a full meeting of the disciples and addressed them, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the word of God so as to give out food; you, brothers, must select from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom; we will hand over this duty to them, and continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the word.' The whole assembly approved of this proposal and elected Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. The word of the Lord continued to spread: the number of disciples in Jerusalem was greatly increased, and a large group of priests made their submission to the faith.

*There are two really striking features about this story. The first is that the first officials appointed in the Church are called 'servers' or 'servants', which is what 'deacons' means. St Paul will stress, writing to the Corinthian community, that any job in the Church is a service to the community. A role in the Church does not confer a dignity which we can boast of, except in so far as it is a sharing in the service given by Christ himself, the Servant of the Lord. The most important part of our job is to attend to the needs of the community, not to preen ourselves on obtaining a grand position. The second feature of the reading is that (even so early in the life of the ideal early community) a squabble occurs. One group feels that it is being neglected. The split may even be worse than Luke allows us to see, for all the new officials appointed belong to only one of the two parties mentioned, that is to the Hellenists. This is not going to ensure an even distribution of food between the two groups! Even in a good community reconciliation of differences needs to occur constantly.*

*Is there any split in your community which needs to be reconciled?*

## Second Reading: *A Royal Priesthood*

### 1 Peter 2:4-9

The Lord is the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him; set yourselves close to him so that you too, the holy priesthood that offers the spiritual sacrifices which Jesus Christ has made acceptable to God, may be living stones making a spiritual house. As scripture says: See how I lay in Zion a precious cornerstone that I have chosen and the man who rests his trust on it will not be disappointed. That means that for you who are believers, it is precious; but for unbelievers, the stone rejected by the builders has proved to be the keystone, a stone to stumble over, a rock to bring men down. They stumble over it because they do not believe in the word; it was the fate in store for them. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

*The background of this reading is the covenant between God and his people of Israel on Mount Sinai. There the mountain was so sacred that the people were not allowed to approach it. Now the author tells us that the new people of God, chosen by God, is so valuable itself that all of us (not just a leading figure) are invited to huddle close to the true sacred rock that is Christ himself. In the Old Dispensation Moses alone was holy enough to approach the mountain and offer sacrifice; now it is the whole people. It is the whole people which is now constituted as a royal priesthood and it is a consecrated people which can offer sacrifice. One of the principal emphases of the Second Vatican Council was to underline that the Eucharistic sacrifice is offered by the whole people, not by the priest alone. Yes, the priest does have a special function, that of presiding at the Eucharist, and without this presidency the Eucharist cannot take place. Nevertheless, the Eucharist is the sacrifice of the people as a whole, which the laity offer just as much as the priest. The reading also uses another Gospel image: the people of God is a house built of living stones, a living holy Temple, built on the foundation stone who is Christ and topped by the keystone who is Christ.*

*What does it mean to think of the Eucharist as 'our offering'?*

“The people of God is a house built of living stones.”

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

w: [www.wednesdayword.org](http://www.wednesdayword.org)

e: [info@wednesdayword.org](mailto:info@wednesdayword.org)