



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 13th August 2023 - The Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Relax & Remember

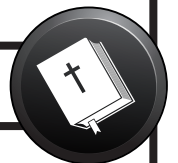
Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this 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 Sunday 13th August 2023 - Jesus and Peter on the Water (Matthew 14:22-33)

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was battling with a heavy sea, for there was a head-wind. In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. 'It is a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.' It was Peter who answered. 'Lord', he said, 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' 'Come,' said Jesus. Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord! Save me!' he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'Man of little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?' And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'



3 Reflect

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

The Christian people are often depicted as a boat, with Peter at the helm. As in a boat, everyone has their part to play: kids to bring the excitement and the challenge, parents to take the responsibility, grandparents just to be there to comfort and reassure. Without Jesus the disciples were getting exhausted, frustrated and probably bad-tempered and quarrelling. When Jesus appears everything changes: first, terror and awed amazement, then Peter rushes to meet him – and loses confidence, only to be swiftly rescued. How does Jesus come to me? In the joys of family? In the unwelcome criticism of an angry neighbour who tells me the truth about myself? In the worries of a job or the agonies of a failed relationship? In the staggering beauty of creation? In physical pain? In all these situations we may discover God's presence, and without that presence we cannot expect to cope. Jesus does not force himself upon us. He just jogs us, and says, 'Here I am if you want me.' He may disappear into the sea-mist again for a time, and we may sink into the water like mistrustful Peter. But it all ends with a welcome and a recognition that Jesus can help, even in a life-threatening situation.

Why is Peter such a good role-model for us?

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 13th August 2023



First Reading: *Elijah's Encounter with the Lord*

1 Kings 19:9.11-13

When Elijah reached Horeb, the mountain of God, he went into the cave and spent the night in it. Then he was told, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord.' Then the Lord himself went by. There came a mighty wind, so strong it tore the mountains and shattered the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there came the sound of a gentle breeze. And when Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

This magnificent story of Elijah's encounter with the Lord is read today in church to pair with Peter's encounter with Jesus, the Son of God, on Lake Galilee. Elijah was fleeing from the threat of persecution, and had trekked for forty days and forty nights. Mount Horeb is an awesome place, a rocky mountain on Sinai. No earth, vegetation, or animals there - just stark rock, some iron-ore red, some granite-grey, some almost sulphur-green. It was here that Moses and the People of Israel had their experience of God, too, and the silent mountains almost speak of the Lord. There are experiences which cannot be put into words, whether it is the ecstasy of love or music or beauty. No one can adequately express in words the experience of an encounter with God, and Elijah's is described quite differently from that of Moses, who experienced God in thunder, lightning and earthquake: the light, murmuring sound (the 'sound of a gentle breeze') which Elijah hears is literally 'a sound of silence'. In this case the meeting so strengthened Elijah that he returned to his mission. It is because of these encounters that Moses and Elijah are present at the Transfiguration, when the closest disciples experience the divinity of Jesus on the holy mountain.

Do you know of other people's stories where an encounter with God has changed their lives? How has God touched your life?

Second Reading: *The Holy People of Israel*

Romans 9:1-5

What I want to say is no pretence; I say it in union with Christ - it is the truth - my conscience in union with the Holy Spirit assures me of it too. What I want to say is this: my sorrow is so great, my mental anguish so endless, I would willingly be condemned and be cut off from Christ if it could help my brothers of Israel, my own flesh and blood. They were adopted as sons, they were given the glory and the covenants; the Law and the ritual were drawn up for them, and the promises were made to them. They are descended from the patriarchs and from their flesh and blood came Christ who is above all, God for ever blessed! Amen.

“The inscrutable wisdom of God.”

After his exposition of Christ's saving work Paul turns to the question which tortures him: how is it that Israel, so long prepared, failed to recognize the fulfilment of the prophecies. Paul was a Jew through and through, and was deeply wounded by the failure of his own people to welcome Jesus, despite all the privileges given them which he enumerates in today's reading. For Paul, Christianity is the conclusion to which Judaism was meant to lead. But God never revokes his gifts, and these gifts still belong to the Jews; it can never be said that the Jews have been superseded and lost their status as God's chosen people. For the next two chapters in Romans Paul quotes every conceivable scripture to show that the rebellions of the Jews against God throughout their history made it inevitable that they would fail to recognize the Messiah. Nevertheless, he insists, a remnant will turn to the Lord in the end. The dead branches have been cut off to make room for the gentiles to be grafted in, and the old branches will be grafted in again at the end. However, this horticultural image does not quite work - you can't graft in dead branches - so in the end Paul simply throws up his hands and praises the inscrutable wisdom of God.

What place do the Jewish people have in God's plan for the world?

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