

W THE WEDNESDAY WORD

The Parish Version

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



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 23rd April 2023 - The Journey to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

Two of the disciples of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, 'What matters are you discussing as you walk along?' They stopped short, their faces downcast. Then one of them, called Cleopas answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days.' 'What things?' he asked. 'All about Jesus of Nazareth,' they answered, 'who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.' Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself. When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening,' they said, 'and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at the table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?' They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

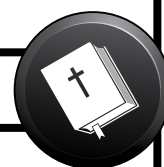
3 Reflect

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

This attractive and delicate narrative is the story of the journey to faith in the Risen Christ: it occurs in any Christian instruction, and especially in the Eucharist, which begins with the teaching of the scriptures, and then is brought to its fulfilment in the Sacrament. The two disciples (are they man and woman, as so often in Luke, perhaps Cleopas and his wife?) start off deep in depression and disappointment. But they are open-minded and willing to learn as the Stranger explains to them from scripture the meaning of events. Their hearts burn within them at the Stranger's words, but their eyes remain closed. It is only in the sacramental meal that they recognise the Risen Christ. This is the story of any Christian instruction, culminating in the Eucharist, for the Eucharist is a sacrament of initiation, bringing us to the intimate, personal encounter with Christ. Once they have been enlightened and have learnt the profound meaning of the events, the truth of the scriptures and the resurrection, then the disciples return to the Holy City and carry on their own Christian apostolate by spreading the news of the resurrection. This is the shape of the Christian vocation which we all receive, to assimilate and pass on the meaning of Christ's resurrection.

How can we learn the meaning of Christ's resurrection? How can we spread the message of 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 23rd April 2023



First Reading: *The Meaning of Resurrection*

Acts 2:14. 22-33

On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd in a loud voice: 'Men of Israel, listen to what I am going to say: Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God by the miracles and portents and signs that God worked through him when he was among you, as you all know. This man, who was put into your power by the deliberate intention and foreknowledge of God, you took and had crucified by men outside the Law. You killed him, but God raised him to life, freeing him from the pangs of Hades; for it was impossible for him to be held in its power since, as David says of him, "I saw the Lord before me always, for with him at my right hand nothing can shake me. So my heart was glad and my tongue cried out with joy: my body, too, will rest in the hope that you will not abandon my soul to Hades nor allow your holy one to experience corruption. You have made known the way of life to me, you will fill me with gladness through your presence." Brothers, no one can deny that the patriarch David himself is dead and buried: his tomb is still with us. But since he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn him an oath to make one of his descendants succeed him on the throne, what he foresaw and spoke about was the resurrection of the Christ: he is the one who was not abandoned to Hades, and whose body did not experience corruption. God raised this man Jesus to life, and all of us are witnesses to that. Now raised to the heights by God's right hand, he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit, who was promised, and what you see and hear is the outpouring of that Spirit.'

Pentecost was the birthday of the Church, the moment when the Christian Church was born. This reading from Peter's speech at Pentecost explains not so much the actual event of the gift of the Spirit, but the event which lies behind it, the Resurrection. Peter sees it as predicted in the psalm: the Holy One of the Lord can never remain lying in the corruption of the grave; his resurrection is the revelation of true and permanent life. It brings to a conclusion the whole plan of God for the world. The scriptures of the Old Testament teach us the ways of God with the struggling and recalcitrant human race: they tell us about the highs and the lows, our fidelity to the Lord and our betrayals. We can see ourselves in every stage of this history, as it mirrors our own hopes, our promises and our failures. But running through it all is the certainty that God will fulfil his pledge to Eve to bring good out of evil. So the resurrection of Christ is God's acceptance of the loving obedience of his Son, expressing and renewing the loving obedience of the human race, which we, unaided, could not provide for ourselves. By raising Christ to life God shows his final acceptance of Christ's re-dedication to him of our human loyalty.

What does it mean to say that you share Christ's risen life?

Second Reading: *The Blood of the Lamb*

1 Peter 1:17-21

If you are acknowledging as your Father one who has no favourites and judges everyone according to what he has done, you must be scrupulously careful as long as you are living away from your home. Remember, the ransom that was paid to free you from the useless way of life your ancestors handed down was not paid in anything corruptible, neither in silver nor gold, but in the precious blood of a lamb without spot or stain, namely Christ; who, though known since before the world was made, has been revealed only in our time, the end of the ages, for your sake. Through him you now have faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for that very reason - so that you would have faith and hope in God.

In the Middle Ages, when ransoming was a current practice for setting captives free, theologians debated to whom the ransom of Christ's blood was paid: was it to God or to the devil? However, the real context of this passage is Old Testament sacrifice, and particularly sacrifice for sin. In these rites the blood is valuable not for the pain it represents but for life. There can be no reconciliation without blood, according to Leviticus 17:11, for blood represents life. The blood of a living creature belongs to God because it represents the God-given life. Once the blood is shed there is no more life. So in Hebrew thought the blood is a cleansing and enlivening agent, renewing life: it takes away and overrides the deadness of sin. The blood of Christ cleanses us since it represents the divine life which is given to us. So in the Book of Revelation the garments of the martyrs are washed white (the colour of victory) in the blood of the Lamb, that is, they receive new life. This also explains the importance of the Eucharistic Blood of Christ, which gives us Christ's own divine life and enables us to live with his life.

What is the significance of the Blood of Christ which is offered for us in the Mass?

“The blood of Christ cleanses us.”

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