

Wednesday 19th July 2023 - A WEEKLY PRAYER CUSTOM



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 23rd July 2023 - The Sixteenth 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 23rd July 2023 - A Parable of Growth (Matthew 13:24-30)

Jesus put a parable before the crowds, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everybody was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off. When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, the darnel appeared as well. The owner's servants went to him and said, "Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?" "Some enemy has done this," he answered. And the servants said, "Do you want us to go and weed it out?" But he said, "No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn.'"



3 Reflect

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

The Gospel of Matthew gathers together a whole set of pictures which Jesus used to describe the society of God's servants which he was intent on setting up. Matthew calls it 'the Kingdom of Heaven'. Jews avoided bandying around the name of 'God', so Matthew calls it by the place where God is enthroned, Heaven. The first picture, the wheat and the darnel, shows that in some of those called the good seed has been overlaid by weed. In its early growth this weed, the inedible darnel, is incredibly difficult for a non-farmer to distinguish from good barley. No more can we presume to sort out who is seeking God and who is not; it is dangerous to despise or to dismiss anyone at all. The explanation given by Matthew constitutes a warning that the harvest, the judgment, will come in the end.

Do we have any right to judge others (or may we be mistaking wheat for darnel)? What is the darnel in us that needs weeding out before the judgment?

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 23rd July 2023



First Reading: *The Leniency of God*

Wisdom 12:13.16-19

There is no god, other than you, who cares for everything, to whom you might have to prove that you never judged unjustly. Your justice has its source in strength, your sovereignty over all makes you lenient to all. You show your strength when your sovereign power is questioned and you expose the insolence of those who know it; but, disposing of such strength, you are mild in judgement, you govern us with great lenience, for you have only to will, and your power is there. By acting thus you have taught a lesson to your people how the virtuous man must be kindly to his fellow men, and you have given your sons the good hope that after sin you will grant repentance.

The Book of Wisdom was written in Greek, shortly before the birth of Jesus, for the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria. Much of it concerns the harsh treatment of the Hebrews in Egypt before the Exodus under Moses. Here the author has moved on to describe luridly the depravity of the inhabitants of Canaan before the Israelites arrived in the Holy Land. Nevertheless, God cared for them and treated them with leniency, giving them opportunity for repentance. This has two lessons for the readers of the Book: firstly, they too must pardon the sinner and be kindly with God's own kindness. Secondly, God always gives a chance to repent of sins and follies, and this applies to us too. This leniency is a sign of God's strength because leniency and generosity can be signs of strength rather than of weakness (it is, for example, the stronger person who has the courage to apologize first). The reading is appointed by the Church to be read today in order to pair with the Gospel reading and this suggests the following possible reading of the Parable of the Wheat and the Darnel: the owner of the field leaves the darnel in place till harvest, that is, till the final judgment, thus leaving the wicked a chance to repent.

How is God's forgiveness a sign of divine strength?

Second Reading: *Prayer in the Spirit*

Romans 8:26-27

The Spirit comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he means, and that the pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God.

These words are an encouraging confirmation by Paul that, when we pray, our own prayers are supplemented by the Spirit of Christ praying within us. What does this mean? Is Paul referring to praying in tongues, which certainly occurred in his Corinthian community? He himself says that he had the gift of tongues also, though he did not frequently exercise it. However, Paul's meaning is surely wider than this. If we pray to praise the glory of God and give thanks for God's kindness to us, human language and human intention may not be adequate but are supercharged by the Spirit. Our prayer of repentance, likewise, can never be adequate of itself (without the support of the Spirit). It is the same with our protestations of loyalty and commitment. What about our prayer of petition? We pray desperately for a fine evening for the barbeque (or for rain for the garden) and then we don't get what we ask for. But perhaps the Spirit deepens these somewhat selfish prayers into a profound desire to be brought nearer to God and so allowing Him to grant whatever is truly best for us and those for whom we care! 'The prayers that the Spirit makes for God's holy people are always in accordance with the mind of God' – they go beyond our petty and ephemeral requests, because Christ is praying within us.

How does Paul's teaching on the Spirit make a difference to our understanding of prayer and so deepen the way we pray?

“Christ is praying within us.”