



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 29th January 2023 - The Fourth 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 29th January 2023 - The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them: 'How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage. Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted. Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied. Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them. Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God. Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called sons of God. Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

3 Reflect

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

In Matthew's Gospel these eight blessings stand at the head of the Sermon on the Mount, pointing out eight ways in which we can welcome God into our lives. They are ways of living out God's blessing. The first and the last knit them all together with the phrase 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven'. In his Gospel, Luke also begins his Sermon on the Plain with four such blessings – only his blessings focus more on those who are materially poor and in need, whereas Matthew's concentrate on the spiritual attitudes required of the Christian, 'poor in spirit, hunger and thirst for justice'. Jesus came to proclaim the kingship of his Father, and these are ways of living it. For each beatitude, do you know someone who exemplifies the attitude? Which is your own favourite? For most of them there are gospel incidents in which Jesus illustrates how to live out the beatitude, like the entry into Jerusalem on a donkey as the gentle king, or the love he shows in his welcome to sinners, or his bringing peace to those tortured by disease or contempt, or his purity of heart in his single-minded pre-occupation with his Father's will, or finally his acceptance of persecution for what he knew to be right.

Which of these qualities would you like to have more of? Which quality will bring you closest to 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.**



**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 29th January 2023



First Reading: *Blessed by the Lord*

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

Seek the Lord all you, the humble of the earth, who obey his commands. Seek integrity, seek humility: you may perhaps find shelter on the day of the anger of the Lord. In your midst I will leave a humble and lowly people, and those who are left in Israel will seek refuge in the name of the Lord. They will do no wrong, will tell no lies; and the perjured tongue will no longer be found in their mouths. But they will be able to graze and rest with no one to disturb them.

Before the Babylonian Exile, Israel tended to equate material prosperity with divine blessing: those who prospered did so because of the Lord's blessing; those who did not must in some way be blameworthy. The Exile put this philosophy in question, and the consequent puzzlement is visible in the Book of Job. These verses from the prophecy of Zephaniah show the new and more satisfying analysis: it is the humble of the Lord who will receive divine blessing, those who seek refuge in the Name or Power of the Lord and recognize their entire dependence on him. The nation of Israel was the plaything of the great powers on either side, dominated first by one, then by the other. Today's reading reflects the spirituality of the powerless Remnant, not giving themselves airs or trusting in their own strength. It is perfectly and consciously exemplified in the people we meet in the Lukan Infancy Narratives, where Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna humbly obey the Law and await the salvation which is to come to them from the Lord. This spirit of humility was not the strong suit of the Corinthians to whom Paul writes in our second reading, but it is partly exemplified in the Beatitudes of the gospel reading.

What, then, is true Christian humility? Is it to say that I am no good at anything, or to recognize my talents and be grateful for them?

Second Reading: *Reversal of Values*

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Take yourselves, brothers, at the time when you were called: how many of you were wise in the ordinary sense of the word, how many were influential people, or came from noble families? No, it was to shame the wise that God chose what is foolish by human reckoning, and to shame what is strong that he chose what is weak by human reckoning; those whom the world thinks common and contemptible are the ones that God has chosen - those who are nothing at all to show up those who are everything. The human race has nothing to boast about to God, but you, God has made members of Christ Jesus and by God's doing he has become our wisdom, and our virtue, and our holiness, and our freedom. As scripture says: if anyone wants to boast, let him boast about the Lord.

“ Christ is for us our wisdom,
our strength, our holiness
and our freedom. ”

The Corinthians seem to have been particularly pleased with themselves, so that Paul mercilessly lavishes his sarcasm on them. In their bravado and their complacency they were happy to rely on their own resources, and expected to be saved by them. Paul repeats to them the lesson of Zephaniah. The public reading of the letter must have embarrassed those at whom it was aimed, and the vigour of Paul's criticism was perhaps the reason why his relationships with this community continued stormy for some time. For us, however, the positive teaching is a treasure: Christ is for us our wisdom, our strength, our holiness and our freedom. Only through Christ can we achieve our ambitions and grow to full human maturity, by participating in the qualities of Christ. Once incorporated into Christ by baptism, we already share in his wisdom, holiness and strength, and even in his freedom, if only we rely on that and not on ourselves. Paul goes on to say that Christ is the Wisdom of God, a teaching which will be elaborated in the later epistles (possibly written not by Paul himself) to the Colossians and Ephesians.

Do I recognise in myself how easy it is to become conceited or part of a clique, excluding others?

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

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