

THE *Wednesday*
WORD



Encountering Christ
The Wednesday Prayer Custom
for Homes, Schools & Parishes

Prayerfully preparing for Sunday Mass with special prayers for our school families



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.



Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present. Read the Gospel, 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.

1

Read
The Gospel for Sunday 2nd June 2024
A NEW PARTNERSHIP

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, his disciples said to Jesus, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the passover?" So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city and you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him, and say to the owner of the house which he enters, 'The Master says: Where is my dining room in which I can eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room furnished with couches, all prepared. Make the preparations for us there." The disciples set out and went to the city and found everything as he had told them, and prepared the Passover. And as they were eating he took some bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to them. "Take it," he said. "This is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had returned thanks he gave it to them, and all drank from it, and he said to them, "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out for many. I tell you solemnly, I shall not drink any more wine until the day I drink the new wine in the kingdom of God." After psalms had been sung they left for the Mount of Olives.

Taken from Mark 14:12-16.22-26 The Most Holy Body and Blood of the Lord

2

Reflect
After reading the Gospel, did any words stand out? If they did, ponder or discuss them before proceeding with the reflection.

The original Old Testament covenant was sealed by a death and by the sharing of the blood between God (signified by the altar) and his people as a sign of new life (see today's first reading). Israel broke that covenant by persistently refusing to keep true to the way of life which the covenant enshrined. Now Jesus' new covenant engages us in a new alliance and gives us new life. The story told in this reading is the warranty and guarantee that, each time we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, we are bound anew into his covenant. The story is told in almost exactly similar terms in each of the first three gospels and in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. It must have been learnt and repeated by heart. There is just enough difference to show that Mark and Matthew reflect the tradition of the Hebrew communities, while Paul and Luke reflect the tradition of the Greek-speaking communities. This narrative must have been repeated again and again from the very first years of Christianity. Each time we repeat these words 'This is my body. This is my blood', we are entering again into Jesus' covenant. There should be a health warning. The Mass is a serious business: are you ready to commit yourself to the Kingdom, to engage in a new and personal alliance with Christ and to live your life in Him? **What obligations do we take on by receiving the Eucharist?**

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

3

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. Thank God for any insight you may have received.

Then ask God to bless you with a spiritual gift to help you act on any resolution you have made. Perhaps: love, hope, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, patience, humility, joy, forgiveness, self-control, courage, generosity, faith or something else.

4

Pray for Families

This Wednesday's word for our school families is LIFE!

After praying for your loved ones, please remember to pray for our present and future Church, particularly for the families connected to our schools. You may want to conclude this special weekly time with a simple prayer such as:

St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church, pray for us. Mary, Star of Evangelisation, pray for us. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of **Sunday 2nd June 2024**



1st Reading: Exodus 24:3-8

God's Covenant with his People

Moses went and told the people all the commands of the Lord and all the ordinances. In answer, all the people said with one voice, "We will observe all the commands that the Lord has decreed." Moses put all the commands of the Lord into writing, and early next morning he built an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve standing-stones for the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he directed certain young Israelites to offer holocausts and to immolate bullocks to the Lord as communion sacrifices. Half of the blood Moses took up and put into basins, the other half he cast on the altar. And taking the Book of the Covenant he read it to the listening people, and they said, "We will observe all that the Lord has decreed; we will obey." Then Moses took the blood and cast it towards the people. "This", he said, "is the blood of the Covenant that the Lord has made with you, containing all these rules."



The first reading gives the story of the making of the Covenant on Mount Sinai, the moment when Israel became God's people and took on themselves the joyful obligations of the Law. The Law was God's gift to Israel, explaining what they must do to be his people. It was not a set of constricting obligations but a liberating set of instructions. Obedience to the Law was a response in love to a gift in love, to behave towards God with the generosity which God showed to his people. The people must now behave towards others as God had behaved towards them, by respecting the widow, caring for the orphan, welcoming the stranger. 'Be holy as I am holy', said the Lord. This reading is particularly apt at the Mass for Corpus Christi because this Old Testament ritual, just like the Mass, includes both instructions and sacrifice. In the first part of the Mass we listen to God's revealing Word, which tells us in various ways how to behave if we are to be God's people. Only after committing ourselves to God's Word can we go on to join in the new alliance of Christ's sacrifice through the shedding of his blood.

How does Christ nourish us in the Eucharist?

Life is the gift of God.



2nd Reading: Hebrews 9:11-15

The Blood of Christ

Now Christ has come, as the high priest of all the blessings which were to come. He has passed through the greater, the more perfect tent, which is better than one made by men's hands because it is not of this created order; and he has entered the sanctuary once and for all, taking with him not the blood of goats and bull calves, but his own blood, having won an eternal redemption for us. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer are sprinkled on those who have incurred defilement and they restore the holiness of their outward lives; how much more effectively the blood of Christ, who offered himself as the perfect sacrifice to God through the eternal Spirit, can purify our inner self from dead actions so that we do our service to the living God. He brings a new covenant, as the mediator, only so that the people who were called to an eternal inheritance may actually receive what was promised: his death took place to cancel the sins that infringed the earlier covenant.



Blood plays an important part in all three readings of this Mass, and it is essential to understand its function in Israel's and in our sacramental system. Blood is an obvious symbol of life. Total loss of blood means total loss of life. As blood flows out, so life ebbs away. Therefore, just as life belongs to God, so blood belongs to God. In Israel blood is sacred. In recognition that life is the gift of God, blood may not be consumed. Sacrifice in Israel was not appeasing an angry God, by offering the death of an animal instead of my own death. Rather, it was a joyful sharing with God, the sharing of a meal, and the granting of new life. Death releases the blood, which can then be sprinkled over those offering the sacrifice to symbolize fresh life from God. The Letter to the Hebrews contrasts the old sacrifices and old sharing of blood, 'the blood of goats and bull calves,' with the gift of Christ's blood. How much more is the new life, given by the blood of the divine Son of God! The gift of Christ's blood from the chalice brings life.

What is the difference between the Christian and the pagan idea of sacrifice?

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

**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**