

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 20th October 2024
A LIFE OF SERVICE

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus. “Master,” they said to him, “we want you to do us a favour.” He said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” They said to him, “Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory.” “You do not know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup that I must drink, or be baptised with the baptism with which I must be baptised?” They replied, “We can.” Jesus said to them, “The cup that I must drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I must be baptised you shall be baptised, but as for seats at my right hand or my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted.” When the other ten heard this they began to feel indignant with James and John, so Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that among the pagans their so-called rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Taken from Mark 10:35-45 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B (Shorter version)

2

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

Three times in Mark’s gospel Jesus formally tells his disciples about his coming Passion, and each time they seem entirely deaf to it. So each time Jesus counters their misunderstanding by repeating the need for a disciple to follow him in suffering. Today’s reading begins just after the third prophecy, and – true to form - the sons of Zebedee reply with a request for the best seats at the banquet of the Kingdom! Matthew in his gospel spares the two disciples by putting the request in their poor mother’s mouth; only in a second exchange with Jesus do they woodenly accept to share Jesus’ ‘cup’ and ‘baptism’. Do they really know what they are accepting, or do they just blithely agree and answer ‘Yes’ to Jesus’ question about sharing the same ‘cup’ as their ‘Master’? The indignation of the other disciples prompts Jesus to deliver his clearest statement in words that authority in the Church should be regarded as service. His clearest statement in action about service is the smelly business of washing the travel-gnarled feet of his disciples at his last meal with them. **How does Jesus envisage leadership in the Church? How may we all live better lives of service?**

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 GREATNESS !

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 20th October 2024**



1st Reading: Isaiah 53:10-11

The Suffering Servant of the Lord

The Lord has been pleased to crush his servant with suffering. If he offers his life in atonement, he shall see his heirs, he shall have a long life and through him what the Lord wishes will be done. His soul's anguish over, he shall see the light and be content. By his sufferings shall my servant justify many, taking their faults on himself.



The whole of this Fourth Song of the Suffering Servant is read at the liturgy of Good Friday. Today we have only a part, but enough to show that the Servant's suffering somehow fulfils God's purposes: it brings glory to the Servant and salvation to others. We do not know who the servant originally envisaged by the author was: perhaps the prophet himself or perhaps the people of Israel suffering in exile in Babylon. But in Christ we can see a further meaning in this reading. We know from Jesus' own sayings that he saw himself as the complete fulfilment of these poems: 'The Son of man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many'. He saw his life as one of service and of perfect obedience to the Lord, his Father. He saw his task to be the establishment of the Kingship of God on earth, which would bring salvation to all, and that opposition to this Kingship would bring him suffering and eventually death. This selfless obedience of Jesus would undo the stubborn disobedience of all humanity, symbolised by the sin of Adam. It would bring to completion the Lord's designs for the world and for all creation.

Whom did the prophet mean by the Suffering Servant? How does this Servant "fulfil" God's purposes?



2nd Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16

The Supreme High Priest

Since in Jesus, the Son of God, we have the supreme high priest who has gone through to the highest heaven, we must never let go of the faith that we have professed. For it is not as if we had a high priest who was incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us; but we have one who has been tempted in every way that we are, though he is without sin. Let us be confident, then, in approaching the throne of grace, that we shall have mercy from him and find grace when we are in need of help.



The Letter to the Hebrews contrasts the supreme High Priest with the transient high priests of Judaism. In order to bring humanity to perfection, Jesus had to share completely in our humanity. He was 'tempted in every way that we are': temptations to anger, to intolerance, to regard others as inferior. He was 'capable of feeling our weaknesses': fear, frustration, laziness, boredom. In the gospels a few of these 'weaknesses' are mentioned: his exhaustion at the well in Samaria, his grief at the death of his friend Lazarus. But, as he had a very human personality, he must have suffered the fears and incomprehension of childhood, the frustrations of adolescence, as well as the more complex troubles and sorrows of adulthood, not to mention temptations arising from the unremitting opposition of those who rejected him – all under the overarching passion for his Father and his Kingship. All this would have enriched his personality still further, until he offered the whole of his humanity in obedience to his Father's designs. Just as martyrdom is the crown of a life of Christian fidelity, so Jesus' final sacrifice was the crown of a life of love, obedience and generosity.

What does it mean to say that Jesus feels our "weaknesses" with us?

In order to bring humanity to perfection, Jesus had to share completely in our humanity.

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**