



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 26th December 2021 - The Feast of the Holy Family

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 26th December 2021 (Luke 2:41-52): The Child Jesus in the Temple

Every year the parents of Jesus used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up for the feast as usual. When they were on their way home after the feast, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. They assumed he was with the caravan and it was only after a day's journey that they went to look for him among their relations and acquaintances. When they failed to find him they went back to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere. Three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, "My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you." "Why were you looking for me?" he replied. "Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs." But they did not understand what he meant. He then went down with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men.



3 Reflect

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

This little incident, the only one told of Jesus' youth, has two attractive lessons for us. Firstly, it is a joy to see Jesus behaving just like any other twelve-year-old. He was a real child, and a child of that age goes off exploring, adventuring, unhesitatingly sure that the all-powerful, all-knowing parents will know where he or she has gone; parents, meanwhile, worry themselves sick at the unexplained disappearance of their child. Mary, the young mother, knows her son and the ways of the twelve-year-old. She does not scold or expostulate, but just accepts what he says with love and relief. Secondly, Jesus' reply gives us a glimpse of his relationship to the Father. The phrase 'with my Father's affairs' may equally well be translated 'in my Father's house', but either translation indicates Jesus' total absorption with his Father.

What does it mean to be "busy with my Father's affairs"? What changes would this make in your life?

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 26th December 2021



First Reading: *Honour Your Father & Your Mother*

Ecclesiasticus 3:2-6. 12-14

The Lord honours the father in his children, and upholds the rights of a mother over her sons. Whoever respects his father is atoning for his sins; he who honours his mother is like someone amassing a fortune. Whoever respects his father will be happy with children of his own; he shall be heard on the day when he prays. Long life comes to him who honours his father; he who sets his mother at ease is showing obedience to the Lord. My son, support your father in his old age; do not grieve him during his life. Even if his mind should fail, show him sympathy; do not despise him in your health and strength; for kindness to a father shall not be forgotten but will serve as reparation for your sins.

The Book of Ecclesiasticus is a collection of wise instructions on how to behave in accordance with the Law. The author must have been an expert in the Law, living in Jerusalem. He sees the Law not as a tiresome set of rules to be obeyed but as God's loving gift to his People, to show them how they should act to keep close to God. The Law is therefore to be treasured, a guide of inestimable value. The reading for today is a meditation and expansion on the commandment, 'Honour your father and your mother', explaining just how this should be put into practice. And what was Jesus' relationship like with his parents? What was he like as a baby? Did he cry? He must have done, to make his baby feelings known. Did he bawl and howl? Did he cry when he scraped the skin off his knees? Did he fall out of trees and break his arm? Did he make mistakes? Did he play pranks? He must have made jokes. He must have been a wonderful joy to his parents – loving, delightful company, full of the devastatingly simple wisdom of children. And they must have been loving, wonderful company for him too, an anchor of affection and security.

What would it mean in our society today to truly "honour" our parents and those who are elderly?

Second Reading: *The Overcoat of Love*

Colossians 3:12-21

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful. Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, give way to your husbands, as you should in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and treat them with gentleness. Children, be obedient to your parents always, because that is what will please the Lord. Parents, never drive your children to resentment or you will make them feel frustrated.

In an incredibly short space the Letter to the Colossians gives a whole series of instructions on living in community: compassion, forgiveness, love and peace – not to mention gratitude. Love is a sort of overcoat, holding all the other qualities together. If we reflect on these qualities and put them into practice there can be no rivalry or hostility in the Christian community – even within a family, where the strains of Christmas may at times make love grow thin! However, a loving family is the model for the different relationships of a loving Christian community. God's loving parenting is the model for human parentage, and Christ's devotion to his body, the Church, is the model for the devotion of spouses to one another. Today's reading begins with an inspiring reminder that we form the chosen people of God; God's choice of us leaves us little alternative other than to behave as God's people. The Letter also counsels us to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus; Christians are those over whom the name of the Lord Jesus has been called, making us members of his company and putting us under his power. This is the challenge: that we really act as God's people.

How are we to live fully as a Christian community?

“This is the challenge: that we really act as God's people.”

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

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