



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 31st January 2021 - 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 31st January 2021 (Mark 1:21-28): Jesus Teaches with Authority

Jesus and his followers went as far as Capernaum, and as soon as the sabbath came Jesus went to the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority. In their synagogue just then there was a man possessed by an unclean spirit, and it shouted, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God." But Jesus said sharply, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking each other what it all meant. "Here is a teaching that is new," they said, "and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him." And his reputation rapidly spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.



3 Reflect

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

The growing authority of Jesus is the theme of the early part of Mark's gospel and today's story is an excellent illustration of this. Jesus has already called the disciples. He calls and they simply follow: it seems that he is a total stranger to them, yet has such authority that they drop everything to follow him. Now in the synagogue he teaches on his own authority. He does not quote the interpretations of others, as rabbinic teachers did, saying, "Rabbi X says this," "Rabbi Y says that". No, Jesus teaches, "I say to you...". He seems to be master even of the Law. But it is God's Law. Only God has authority over it, so who does Jesus think he is? On one level he is a teacher to be compared with Moses, one who is to come into the world, the teacher prophesied in today's first reading. But he is more than this. To confirm the power of his teaching, he shows what authority he has by overcoming an unclean spirit, wringing from it the snivelling protest, "Have you come to destroy us?" and the acknowledgement that he has a special link with God.

What are the qualities of a good teacher? How does Jesus, the good teacher, reveal his authority?

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.**



WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 31st January 2021



First Reading: *The Second Moses*

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Moses said to the people: "Your God will raise up for you a prophet like myself, from among yourselves, from your own brothers; to him you must listen. This is what you yourselves asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the Assembly. 'Do not let me hear again,' you said, 'the voice of the Lord my God, nor look any longer on this great fire, or I shall die'; and the Lord said to me, 'All they have spoken is well said. I will raise up a prophet like yourself for them from their own brothers; I will put my words into his mouth and he shall tell them all I command him. The man who does not listen to my words that he speaks in my name, shall be held answerable to me for it. But the prophet who presumes to say in my name a thing I have not commanded him to say, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'"

Moses was the messenger who gave the Law to the people of Israel on Mount Sinai (also called Mount Horeb). In their difficult and lonely journey of forty years through the desert, he was their leader. It was his legal decisions on cases presented to him which helped to form Israel. His prayers gave them manna in the desert, water from the rock and protection from their enemies. Israel remembered him ever afterwards as the founder of their people. In the Book of Deuteronomy, the last of the five books of the Law, God had promised that he would raise up another leader, a Second Moses. By the time of Jesus, God's final messenger was thought of in these terms: he would come to put everything to rights. This is why Matthew especially represents Jesus in this way: just like Moses, Jesus was persecuted at birth by the king, and later had to flee into exile until his persecutor was dead. Jesus taught his Sermon on the Mount just as Moses gave the Law on the mountain. Jesus gave bread in the desert just as Moses had done. So when Jesus taught 'with authority' in the synagogue at Capernaum, he was seen as acting like Moses, the teacher.

In what ways is Jesus the one prophesied by Moses?

Second Reading: *Marriage or Celibacy?*

I Corinthians 7:32-35

I would like to see you free from all worry. An unmarried man can devote himself to the Lord's affairs, all he need worry about is pleasing the Lord; but a married man has to bother about the world's affairs and devote himself to pleasing his wife: he is torn two ways. In the same way an unmarried woman, like a young girl, can devote herself to the Lord's affairs; all she need worry about is being holy in body and spirit. The married woman, on the other hand, has to worry about the world's affairs and devote herself to pleasing her husband. I say this only to help you, not to put a halter round your necks, but simply to make sure that everything is as it should be, and that you give your undivided attention to the Lord.

Paul's reasons for celibacy can be read on two levels. The first, superficial, level is that in marriage both husband and wife may be divided in mind, may have loyalties divided between the Lord and their spouse. They have to be preoccupied with pleasing the other partner in the marriage. In the Church today we see that in itself this is a very important part of the marriage, a vital part of being 'one flesh', of being one thinking, living person. At this level such concern for one another is very much part of 'the Lord's affairs', and cannot stand in opposition to them. At another level, however, there may be tension, for each marriage partner is concerned to provide a firm material basis for family life, and so is bound for the sake of the family to get involved in the 'world', providing a good standard of living for the family. By choosing celibacy, the celibate witnesses more openly to the eternal values of the Lord's service. Celibates have no dependents and are called to dedicate their lives totally to the Lord. The celibate by his or her vocation is given the chance to be manifestly overwhelmed by the values of the Kingdom of God and so become outstanding witnesses to those values.

How, in our busy family lives, can we still act as witnesses to the eternal values of God?

“The eternal values of the Lord's service.”

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