



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 29th October 2023 - The Thirtieth 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 October 2023 (Matthew 22:34-40): **The Greatest Commandment**

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?' Jesus said, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: you must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.'



3 Reflect

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

Familiarity with Jesus' answer to the question about the greatest commandment blunts our awareness of its startling directness. Many answers could be given, perhaps singling out any one of the ten commandments as the greatest, the most important basis of society. A frequent answer to the question was and is the Golden Rule which exists in many cultures: 'Do not do to another what you would not have done to you'. This is basically a selfish answer, protecting one's own interests. By contrast, Jesus' answer hits home, turning us away from self to God. 'Love' (not 'obey' or 'adore' or 'fear' or 'reverence') is the command. Love is not simply the warmth of companionship or of sex, but is the willing generosity of mother to helpless young child or daughter to helpless old parent, of wife to alcoholic husband or husband to paralysed wife, seeking no reward but the happiness of the receiver. Paul gives a useful check-list about love in chapter 13 of his first letter to the Corinthians. John's first letter provides a useful summary: 'No one who fails to love the brother or sister whom he can see, can love God whom he has not seen'.

How do we put into practice this commandment to love?

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 October 2023

First Reading: *Commandments about the Vulnerable and the Poor*

Exodus 22:20-26

The Lord said to Moses, 'Tell the sons of Israel this, "You must not molest the stranger or oppress him, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt. You must not be harsh with the widow, or with the orphan; if you are harsh with them, they will surely cry out to me, and be sure I shall hear their cry; my anger will flare and I shall kill you with the sword; your own wives will be widows, your own children orphans. If you lend money to any of my people, to any poor man among you, you must not play the usurer with him: you must not demand interest from him. If you take another's cloak as a pledge, you must give it back to him before sunset. It is all the covering he has; it is the cloak he wraps his body in; what else would he sleep in? If he cries to me, I will listen, for I am full of pity."'

These are the very primitive laws of the Old Testament, the heart of the first law-code laid down for Israel in the desert of the Exodus, before the Israelites even reached the Holy Land. 'Primitive'? Does our modern society equal them and the values they express? The principle is to help everyone who needs help, even foreigners, widows and orphans - just as God helped the Hebrews when they were slaves in Egypt. Men and women, made in the image of God, are God's representatives on earth, and must continue God's work of caring and healing. Anyone in need must not be humiliated, but must be given full human dignity, allowed to stand tall before his or her neighbours. The creditor may not enter the debtor's house to hassle him, the worker must be paid on time to get his dinner, the homeless must get back his cloak for the night, the vulnerable are not to be exploited. To summarize all this, Jesus will say, 'You must love your neighbour as yourself' - and here too he is quoting the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18).

Who are the vulnerable in our society? How do we continue God's work of caring for them?

Second Reading: *Servants of the Living God*

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

You observed the sort of life we lived when we were with you, which was for your instruction, and you were led to become imitators of us, and of the Lord; and it was with the joy of the Holy Spirit that you took to the gospel, in spite of the great opposition all round you. This has made you the great example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia since it was from you that the word of the Lord started to spread - and not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia, for the news of your faith in God has spread everywhere. We do not need to tell other people about it: other people tell us how we started the work among you, how you broke with idolatry when you were converted to God and became servants of the real, living God; and how you are now waiting for Jesus, his Son, whom he raised from the dead, to come from heaven to save us from the retribution which is coming.

After the consecration at every Mass we remind ourselves that Christ will come again, and the Thessalonians to whom Paul is writing were especially alert to this 'Second Coming' as they waited for Christ to come again from heaven. Paul had taught them that Christ has conquered death, that death is no more, and they mistakenly took this to mean that Christians would not physically die. Paul will answer this misunderstanding later in the letter. We don't know what this 'Second Coming' of Christ will be, but for Christians, history has a purpose and a direction. We do know that each of us will face Christ for our individual judgment when we die. We should not imagine that this will simply consist of Christ doling out suitable penalties to us; but as scripture says, 'No human being can see God and live'. Faced with the stunning purity of the glory of God we will be filled with longing and love, but will surely know too that we are not yet ready to enter into the pure and overwhelming love of God: only when the dross is purged away will we be prepared for entering into Christ's embrace.

What is the best way for us to prepare for the Coming of Christ?

“Faced with the stunning purity of the glory of God...”

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

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