



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 5th September 2021 - The Twenty Third 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 5th September 2021 (Mark 7:31-37): Jesus Cures a Deaf Man

Returning from the district of Tyre, Jesus went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, right through the Decapolis region. And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then looking up to heaven he sighed; and he said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And his ears were opened, and the ligament of his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly. And Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, the more widely they published it. Their admiration was unbounded. "He has done all things well," they said. "He makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak."



3 Reflect

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

This Sunday's first reading prepares us to understand the true meaning of this incident, for in his wonderful cures Jesus is fulfilling that prophecy of Isaiah. Jesus' activity, as he goes around 'doing all things well', manifests the coming of God into the world, that Day of the Lord when the tongues of the dumb will sing for joy. Jesus is the sacrament of God. In him God is active in the world, bringing peace, healing and joy. In him people met and experienced God. His gestures (of putting his fingers into the man's ears and touching his tongue with spittle) are affectionate ways of showing that God is physically at work in him. In a modern hygiene-conscious world such actions might be frowned upon. But if we are truly acting as the members of Christ's body in the world, we cannot hold back, and from time to time we will be involved physically and totally in helping others. One such famous, courageous gesture was Princess Diana's handshake with an AIDS-sufferer when it was still thought that the condition was physically contagious. We too can bring Christ's healing in countless simple (but often costly and courageous) ways.

What do we learn about God from the gestures and words of Jesus in today's Gospel?

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 5th September 2021



First Reading: *The Day of the Lord*

Isaiah 35:4-7

Say to all faint hearts, "Courage! Do not be afraid. Look, your God is coming; vengeance is coming, the retribution of God; he is coming to save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed; then the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy; for water gushes in the desert, streams in the wasteland; the scorched earth becomes a lake, the parched land springs of water.

Before the people of Israel were taken into captivity by the Babylonians in the sixth century BC, prophets had spoken of the Day of the Lord as a threat, a day of expected punishment. But when that disaster fell upon the whole of Israel and Judah, the people came to understand the Day of the Lord as a promise of salvation, of deliverance from exile. Hence today's first reading: a lovely, joyful poem which looks forward to the coming of the Lord to heal Israel and take vengeance on her tormentors. It speaks of the coming of the Lord himself, not simply of his representative. In the expectation of the deliverance of Israel, even up to the time of Jesus, it was not clear whether God would visit the earth personally to effect the total reversal of all things and the healing of all misery, or whether his messenger and herald would come first. The biblical texts seem to suggest both. In the prophecies of Malachi, it was written that the prophet Elijah would come as the Lord's herald to prepare the way. The gospels suggest that John the Baptist was this Elijah-figure, preparing for the coming of the Lord in Jesus, and that the coming of Jesus is the coming of the Lord himself.

What does Isaiah tell us will happen on the Day of the Lord? Has this Day occurred with coming of Jesus or is it still in the future?

Second Reading: *Shabby or Chic?*

James 2:1-5

My brothers, do not try to combine faith in Jesus Christ, our glorified Lord, with the making of distinctions between classes of people. Now suppose a man comes into your synagogue, beautifully dressed and with a gold ring on, and at the same time a poor man comes in, in shabby clothes, and you take notice of the well-dressed man, and say, "Come this way to the best seats;" then you tell the poor man, "Stand over there," or "You can sit on the floor by my foot-rest." Can't you see that you have used two different standards in your mind, and turned yourselves into judges, and corrupt judges at that? Listen, my dear brothers: it was those who are poor according to the world that God chose, to be rich in faith and to be the heirs to the kingdom which he promised to those who love him.

The Letter of James has been described as 'a manifesto for social justice', and among all its pieces of advice a concern for social justice is certainly a major theme. Concern for the poor and the less fortunate runs right through the Bible. Human beings were created in the image of God, and one of the ways we express this image is by the attention we give to those on the margins. So Israel is constantly told by God, 'You must treat the stranger among you as I treated you when you were strangers in Egypt.' Similarly, widows and orphans are the special object of God's care. In the beatitudes of Luke's gospel, the poor, the hungry and those who weep are assured of God's blessing. In more modern times the great papal encyclicals on social issues gave the first official teaching anywhere on the rights of the exploited classes after the industrial revolution: the right to a just wage, to healthcare, to form trade unions, and so on. However, it is always instinctive and natural – as this witty and poignant reading shows – to give more honour to the Lord Mayor at the front than to the tramp who shuffles in at the back of the Church – forgetting that in God's eyes they have just the same value.

What are the social demands of the gospel?

“In God's eyes everyone has just the same value.”

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

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