



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 26th February 2023 - The First Sunday in Lent

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 26th February 2023 - The Testing of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11)

Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.' But he replied, 'Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down; for scripture says: He will put you in his angels' charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.' Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says: You must not put the Lord your God to the test.' Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 'I will give you all these,' he said, 'if you fall at my feet and worship me.' Then Jesus replied, 'Be off, Satan! For scripture says: You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.' Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.

3 Reflect

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

By putting this scene at the beginning of Lent, the Church shows that it sees Lent as a period of testing. Matthew sees this period in the wilderness as the testing of God's Son, just as the People of God (Israel – God's son, whom he brought out of Egypt) was tested for forty years in the desert. We may also see it as the time when Jesus reflected on the mode of his mission. His mission was to bring the Kingship of God to a new realisation: how should he do this? The Tempter suggests false ways, which Jesus rejects one after another, each time using a word from scripture, the Word of God. He rejects the idea of the Messiah merely producing the luxury of the plenteous messianic banquet (stones into food). He rejects the idea of a startling personal miracle which none could gainsay (the leap from the Temple). He rejects the suggestion of entering into league with the Tempter's own values of pride and dominion (rule over the world). At the same time Jesus shows himself to be the Second Moses, the founder of a new People of God: like Moses, he spends forty days and forty nights fasting; like Moses he is taken up onto a high mountain, from where he can see not merely all the territory of the Holy Land, but all the kingdoms of the earth.

What temptation do you find hardest to resist? What helps you to resist temptation?

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 February 2023



First Reading: *The Garden of Eden*

Genesis 2:7-9. 3:1-7

The Lord God fashioned man of dust from the soil. Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and thus man became a living being. The Lord God planted a garden in Eden which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned. The Lord God caused to spring up from the soil every kind of tree, enticing to look at and good to eat, with the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden. The serpent was the most subtle of all the wild beasts that the Lord God had made. It asked the woman, 'Did God really say you were not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?' The woman answered the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden. But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, "You must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death".' Then the serpent said to the woman, 'No! You will not die! God knows in fact that on the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil.' The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, and that it was desirable for the knowledge that it could give. So she took some of its fruit and ate it. She gave some also to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were naked. So they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths.

In Lent the readings are especially carefully chosen. The first readings work through the history of salvation, starting with the story of un-salvation which makes it all necessary - the Fall of Adam and Eve. Presented in the form of a historical story, this is not simply history of what happened long ago to the first Man (Adam means generically 'Man') and Woman. It is also an analysis of what happens to us every day, an image of how sin happens: we are subtly tempted to go against what we know are the divine commandments for life. Look at the way the serpent flatters Eve to make her pleased with herself and so fall all the easier! We fall, come to our senses and find ourselves naked and defenceless. Even so, God does not desert the creatures whom he loves. He comes to their aid, to help them over the worst: he himself sews garments for them to ease their shame, and finally - a few verses later - promises that evil will not eventually prevail. Other cultures have other stories of how evil comes into being, but only the Hebraeo-Christian story ends with the assurance that evil will be conquered, that the seed of the Woman will crush the head of the serpent.

Does the story ring true? Fit it to your own experience!

Second Reading: *The Second Adam*

Romans 5:12.17-19

Sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned. If it is certain that death reigned over everyone as the consequence of one man's fall, it is even more certain that one man, Jesus Christ, will cause everyone to reign in life who receives the free gift that he does not deserve, of being made righteous. Again, as one man's fall brought condemnation on everyone, so the good act of one man brings everyone life and makes them justified. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

“ Christ, by his supreme act of loving obedience, turned back the course of human destiny. ”

Paul's letter to the Romans sets out in glowing confidence and clarity the process by which evil was overcome. Just as the representative of all humanity, Adam, turned away from God, and by his disobedience set humanity on a course leading to disaster, so Christ, by his supreme act of loving obedience, turned back the course of human destiny. Only Christ, who was not only the supreme Man but more than man, could so reverse the course of history and bring to God the homage of the human race which would wipe away and extirpate the rebellion from God wrought by human disobedience. We know full well that we were born into a world where evil begets evil, fraud begets fraud, violence begets violence, jealousy begets jealousy. Salvation consists in the conscious act of putting our faith in Christ, in the reversal he achieved. This understanding of salvation is expressed in Baptism, by which we enter into Christ and clothe ourselves in his redemption. So the one Man, Adam, prefigures the one Man, Christ. Only the direction is reversed. Adam is the paradigm of rebellion from God; Christ the paradigm of loving obedience to God.

Can those who have never heard of Christ enter into his salvation?

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