

# Encountering Christ

Prayerfully preparing for Sunday Mass with special prayers for our school families

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.

## 1 Read

The Gospel for Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2024  
**THE CALL OF THE DISCIPLES**

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. "The time has come," he said, "and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News." As he was walking along by the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net in the lake - for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you into fishers of men." And at once they left their nets and followed him. Going on a little further, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they too were in their boat, mending their nets. He called them at once and, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after him.

*Taken from Mark 1:14-20 The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B*

## 2 Reflect

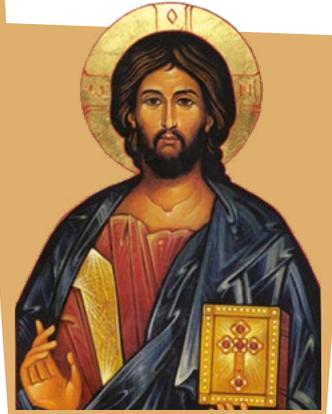
After spending a few minutes considering the Gospel, continue by reading this reflection

What is going on? We had last Sunday the story of the first two disciples joining Jesus. One of them was Andrew, the other unnamed. Now we get another story, in another place, of other first disciples being called. So the Church underlines, two weeks running, the importance of Jesus' new community. The first thing he does is call disciples. He can't do everything on his own, and that is the point of the Church. He calls disciples to make a new people, a new Israel - old, young, middle-aged: we all have our part to fill in Jesus' play. Tired old people, busy parents, lively youngsters - each of us can make a unique contribution, especially since Jesus has chosen us himself. An odd choice, some of us! What did he want ME to do in the new family of Jesus? The two different versions of the calling of the disciples show that at least two different people told this story. When two people tell the same story, there are bound to be variations. The place didn't matter, or the order in which the disciples were called. The point of the story was the call, the response and the companionship, the working together with the Lord.

**Do you enjoy more being on your own or linking up with others? What is Jesus calling you to do?**

*Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB*

THE *Wednesday*  
**WORD**  
PARISH VERSION



## 3 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. Thank God for any insight you may have received.

Then ask God to bless you with a spiritual gift to help you act on any resolution you have made. Perhaps: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, joy or something else.

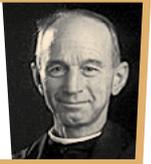
## 4 Remember

After praying for your loved ones, please remember to pray for the Church and particularly for families connected to your parish school.

You may want to conclude this special weekly time with a simple prayer such as: St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church, pray for us. Mary, Star of Evangelisation, pray for us. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

# WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2024



1st Reading: *Jonah 3:1-5.10*

## Nineveh Changes its Ways

The word of the Lord was addressed to Jonah: "Up!" he said. "Go to Nineveh, the great city, and preach to them as I told you to." Jonah set out and went to Nineveh in obedience to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was a city great beyond compare: it took three days to cross it. Jonah went on into the city, making a day's journey. He preached in these words, "Only forty days more and Nineveh is going to be destroyed." And the people of Nineveh believed in God; they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least. God saw their efforts to renounce their evil behaviour. And God relented: he did not inflict on them the disaster which he had threatened.



The story of Jonah (whale and all) does not even pretend to be historical. For one thing, it takes about ten minutes to walk across the ruins of Nineveh - not three days! The story is a joke by Jews against Jews who think they alone can be saved: Jonah the Jew tries to run away from God, whereas the gentiles at Nineveh repent as soon as they hear God's message - even the animals wear sackcloth! This is like the story about St Peter showing Protestants round heaven: Peter points to a high wall: "Hush! The Catholics are behind there. They think they are the only people here!" This reading is chosen to pair with the call of the disciples because of the immediacy of their response: the Ninevites and the disciples take the message to heart without hesitation.

**Have there been any times in your life when, like Jonah, you too have run away from God or judged others harshly?**



2nd Reading: *1 Corinthians 7:29-31*

## This Passing World

Brothers: our time is growing short. Those who have wives should live as though they had none, and those who mourn should live as though they had nothing to mourn for; those who are enjoying life should live as though there were nothing to laugh about; those whose life is buying things should live as though they had nothing of their own; and those who have to deal with the world should not become engrossed in it. I say this because the world as we know it is passing away.



The earliest Christians were very aware that the Resurrection of Christ ushered in the last period of the world. With the fulfilment of God's promises in Jesus' death and resurrection everything important had happened. They believed that the end was imminent, and it was urgent for everyone to get ready. What must we think of this attitude two thousand years later? Yes, it is urgent for every individual to respond to God's call, and there is no time to lose. Every decision counts, every step along the path leads in one direction or the other, closer to God or further away. However, this is an instance where we must consider the message of the Bible as a whole, where one teaching balances another. "The Kingdom of God is close at hand!" does not mean that the world will end tomorrow. Matthew's gospel is quite clear that there is time before the last judgment to practise good works of prayer and generosity. At the last supper Jesus teaches that his disciples have a task to do in the world, guided by the Holy Spirit. So Paul is not teaching here that Christians should 'down tools' and sit waiting for the end, but that we must not absorb the values of those around us who think that the supermarket, the sports centre and the holiday cottage are the only realities worth thinking about; for us the Kingdom and its values are paramount.

**What does it mean to say that for Christians 'the world as we know it is passing away'?**

**“There is time before the last judgment to practise good works of prayer and generosity.”**

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

**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**