



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 1st May 2016 - The Sixth Sunday of Easter

1 Relax & Remember

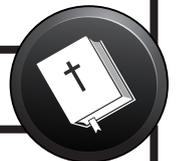
Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this 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 1st May 2016 - The Promise of the Spirit (John 14:23-29)

Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him. Those who do not love me do not keep my words. And my word is not my own: it is the word of the one who sent me. I have said these things to you while still with you; but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you. Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me say: I am going away, and shall return. If you loved me you would have been glad to know that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you this now before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe."



3 Reflect

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

In these final discourses of Jesus at the Last Supper (as he sketches the outlines of his future Church) there are four passages which promise the coming of a Paraclete or Advocate, the Holy Spirit. 'Paraclete' and 'Advocate' mean the same: someone who is called to your side as a supporter, often in a legal situation. The Father will send this Paraclete, in the name and power of Jesus, so that the Paraclete will make Christ present in the Church, not physically but in a new way. The Paraclete will strengthen Jesus' disciples with Christ's own strength. The Paraclete will lead the disciples into all truth, so that they gradually come to a fuller understanding of all the implications of the teaching of Jesus. Like any legal advocate, the Paraclete will provide the followers of Jesus with the power in teaching and argument to withstand opposition. This is the power which will guide the Church in ages to come, not only the official teachers of the Church, the successors of the apostles, but all the faithful who preserve and enrich the tradition of the Church by their prophetic office. The decree of Vatican II on the Church leaves no doubt that not only the call to sanctity but also participation in the prophetic office of Christ extends to all the members of the Church; this is an inspiring and awesome responsibility for us all.

For what special task do I most need the Paraclete's strength and guidance?

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 1st May 2016



First Reading: *The Council at Jerusalem*

Acts 15:1-2. 22-29

Some men came down from Judaea and taught the brothers, "Unless you have yourselves circumcised in the tradition of Moses you cannot be saved." This led to disagreement, and after Paul and Barnabas had had a long argument with these men it was arranged that Paul and Barnabas and others of the church should go up to Jerusalem and discuss the problem with the apostles and elders. Then the apostles and elders decided to choose delegates to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; the whole church concurred with this. They chose Judas known as Barsabbas and Silas, both leading men in the brotherhood, and gave them this letter to take with them: 'The apostles and elders, your brothers, send greetings to the brothers of pagan birth in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. We hear that some of our members have disturbed you with their demands and have unsettled your minds. They acted without any authority from us, and so we have decided unanimously to elect delegates and to send them to you with Barnabas and Paul, men we highly respect who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accordingly we are sending you Judas and Silas, who will confirm by word of mouth what we have written in this letter. It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to saddle you with any burden beyond these essentials: you are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from fornication. Avoid these, and you will do what is right. Farewell.'

This was the crucial meeting of the whole Church at Jerusalem where the decision was made that Christianity was not only for Jews but was open to the gentiles too. Paul's activity in receiving gentiles into the Church had created a crisis: was not God's promise to Abraham limited only to Jews? Was it not limited only to those who observed the prescriptions of the Law? Could the Spirit of the risen Christ really dwell in and activate the uncircumcised? The staggering breakthrough achieved here at Jerusalem totally altered the course of history. Today's reading jumps to the concluding instructions and omits the details of the debate which, in fact, provides a model for a community discussion: in the awareness of the presence of the Spirit the apostles and elders heard the facts of the case, listened to the opinions on both sides of the question put forward by experienced leaders, and then made their decision in the Spirit. The letter of instructions which follows is also a model of its kind, firm in its decisions, but firm also in its appreciation of individual consciences. The restrictions imposed on gentile Christians were designed to make fellowship with Jewish Christians possible without outraging their sensibilities.

How do I make decisions in my life? Could I learn anything from the apostles in this reading? Is there some way in which I could be more involved in the life of the Church – in the Parish, for example?

Second Reading: *The Holy City of Jerusalem*

Revelation 21:10-14. 22-23

In the spirit, the angel took me to the top of an enormous high mountain and showed me Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down from God out of heaven. It had all the radiant glory of God and glittered like some precious jewel of crystal-clear diamond. The walls of it were of a great height, and had twelve gates; at each of the twelve gates there was an angel, and over the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; on the east there were three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. The city walls stood on twelve foundation stones, each one of which bore the name of one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. I saw that there was no temple in the city since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple, and the city did not need the sun or the moon for light, since it was lit by the radiant glory of God and the Lamb was a lighted torch for it.

The description of the New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ, begun in last week's reading, continues to be highly symbolic. The twelve gates of the city (drawn from a prophecy in Ezekiel) face the four quarters of the compass, to show that the city embraces the whole universe and is four-square solid. They symbolise the twelve tribes of Israel and so also the twelve apostles. The richness of the city is hinted at in the sparkle of precious stones, not only of diamonds but of many others too. The dimensions of the city are vast: a cube of 1,500 miles in each direction. No need for the light and warmth of the sun, for the Lord God and the Lamb provide a single source for the city's nourishment and illumination. No need for a sacred area, for the presence of the Lord God and the Lamb make the whole city a sacred area. This vision is the ultimate goal of creation, when we share in the very life of God, the ultimate fulfilment of 'thy Kingdom come'. The Letter to the Ephesians expresses it in this way: the whole universe is 'headed up' into Christ, thus making sense of creation and bringing creation to its completion.

If I really lived in the presence of God, what would be the most daunting thing - and what the most encouraging thing?

“The ultimate goal of creation, when we share the very life of God.”

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