



## **Encountering Christ**

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



**Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2016 - Ascension Sunday**

### **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 8<sup>th</sup> May 2016 - The Ascension (Luke 24:46-53)**

Jesus said to his disciples, “You see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this. And now I am sending down to you what the Father has promised. Stay in the city then, until you are clothed with the power from on high.” Then he took them out as far as the outskirts of Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. Now as he blessed them, he withdrew from them and was carried up to heaven. They worshipped him and then went back to Jerusalem full of joy; and they were continually in the Temple praising God.



### **3 Reflect**

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

In his two-volume history Luke has two versions of the Ascension, one at the end of the gospel (today's gospel reading), and one at the beginning of the second volume (our first reading today). The emphasis of the first reading is on the open-ended-ness of the mission of the apostles: they are to wait till the Spirit comes, after which they are to continue their mission until the return of Christ – whenever that is going to be. The emphasis in the gospel reading is on the final blessing of Christ as he departs, and on the joy and thanksgiving which this imparts. There is a sense of completion, for the gospel began in the Temple with the annunciation to Zechariah of the birth of John the Baptist, and it ends in the Temple with the disciples praising God. There is also a sense of beginning, as the Good News is to spread from Jerusalem to all nations. In both readings the challenge is there: Christ must now play his part through us, his followers. If we act in the Spirit, Christ is acting. If we do not, the Spirit is stifled.

**What are the signs that confirm Christ's presence now in the world and in the Church? How can I be a messenger of Christ today?**

**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 8<sup>th</sup> May 2016



## First Reading: *The Ascension*

### Acts 1:1-11

In my earlier work, Theophilus, I dealt with everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven. He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God. When he had been at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. "It is," he had said, "what you have heard me speak about: John baptised with water but you, not many days from now, will be baptised with the Holy Spirit." Now having met together, they asked him, "Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth." As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were still staring into the sky when suddenly two men in white were standing near them and they said, "Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking into the sky? Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, this same Jesus will come back in the same way as you have seen him go there."

How are we to envisage what happened at the Ascension? Two feet disappearing into a cloud? The Ascension is mentioned only in the Acts of the Apostles; the other gospels seem to imply that the risen Christ was glorified on the day of the resurrection itself. Luke, the author of Acts, is putting across several messages. Firstly, the 40 days since Easter should not be carefully counted. In biblical language '40' means just 'a fairly long period', often a period of preparation, like Jesus' 40 days being tested in the desert, or Israel's 40 years in the wilderness after the Exodus. For all that time since Easter Jesus has been preparing his apostles. Secondly, the Ascension marks the definitive parting of the physical Jesus, after which the risen Christ is no longer physically with his disciples: from this time, it is the Spirit of Christ which is at the heart of the Church, inspiring all its activity. Thirdly, Luke likes to present Jesus as a prophet (and more than a prophet), so here Jesus leaves his disciples in the same way as the prophet Elijah, who was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot, leaving his disciple Elisha to carry on his work (and, significantly, filled with a double share of his spirit).

*In what way is the Ascension an encouragement for we followers of Christ? How would you explain the Ascension to a non-Christian friend?*

## Second Reading: *Christ is Supreme*

### Ephesians 1:17-23

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power that he has exercised for us believers. This you can tell from the strength of his power at work in Christ, when he used it to raise him from the dead and to make him sit at his right hand, in heaven, far above every Sovereignty, Authority, Power, or Domination, or any other name that can be named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come. He has put all things under his feet, and made him, as the ruler of everything, the head of the Church; which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation.

“ The power of God...  
has called us to be believers. ”

At the heart of this reading is a blessing, which tells us about the meaning of the Ascension for the Church. It is not the manner of Christ's departure which is important, but the exalted position of Christ, and the power of God which raised Christ from the dead. This same power has called us to be believers, made us rich in the glory of his heritage, and has given us the strength to follow Christ. As Christians we believe that Jesus was divine not only from birth but from the moment of his conception. It was then that the Word of God became flesh. And yet something further happened at the glorification of Christ in his resurrection. Paul says he was 'constituted Son of God in power' at the resurrection. Is this the same as the claim which the high priest declared blasphemous: 'You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven'? In the final scene of the gospel of Matthew Jesus declares, 'All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me', and the Book of Revelation shows the risen Christ sharing the throne of God.

*What does it mean to speak about the power of God and how do we see that power at work in our world?*

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

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