



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 17th July 2016 - The Sixteenth 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 17th July 2016 (Luke 10:38-42): Martha and Mary

Jesus came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha who was distracted with all the serving said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me." But the Lord answered: "Martha, Martha," he said, "you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part; it is not to be taken from her."



3 Reflect

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

Martha and Mary have become classic figures in the Church representing two different styles of life, the active and the contemplative vocation, an active apostolate or a life of prayer. Carried to an extreme, this opposition is, of course, merely silly. No active apostolate can thrive unless it grows out of a life of prayer, for we cannot draw others to the knowledge and love of a God whom we do not ourselves know and love. Nor can a life of prayer be genuine unless it leads to care for others and concern for the salvation of all those whom the Lord loves. Even a strictly enclosed community cannot claim to be a part of Christ's body unless its fabric is one of love and concern for all the members, and especially those in need, the elderly, the sick and the young. In fact, Jesus does not present any such choice between two different religious ways of life. His speech is always in terms of absolutes. He does not use comparatives; he says that Mary has chosen not 'the better' (as our translation has it) but 'the good' part (as the Greek has it). Any 'good' life must be founded on listening devotedly to the Lord and responding to what we have heard.

How important a part does listening to the Lord play in my life as a Christian?

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 17th July 2016



First Reading: Abraham's Hospitality

Genesis 18:1-10

The Lord appeared to Abraham at the Oak of Mamre while he was sitting by the entrance of the tent during the hottest part of the day. He looked up, and there he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them, and bowed to the ground. "My Lord," he said, "I beg you, if I find favour with you, kindly do not pass your servant by. A little water shall be brought; you shall wash your feet and lie down under the tree. Let me fetch a little bread and you shall refresh yourselves before going further. That is why you have come in your servant's direction." They replied, "Do as you say." Abraham hastened to the tent to find Sarah. "Hurry," he said, "knead three bushels of flour and make loaves." Then running to the cattle Abraham took a fine and tender calf and gave it to the servant, who hurried to prepare it. Then taking cream, milk and the calf he had prepared, he laid all before them, and they ate while he remained standing near them under the tree. "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "She is in the tent," he replied. Then his guest said, "I shall visit you again next year without fail and your wife will then have a son."

This splendid narrative of Abraham entertaining the three strangers is chosen by the Church to pair with the gospel reading of Martha and Mary as an example of hospitality. But the tale has many other important aspects to it too. In the story the three men shimmer between being one and three. Since they clearly represent God – in a delightfully human way – this has been understood from the time of the earliest Church writers to be a hint of the Trinity, though the Trinity is not revealed until the New Testament. Another vital element is that it features the beginning of the fulfilment of the promise of a great posterity to Abraham. Abraham's faith has been tested by having to wait until both he and his wife are well beyond the normal age of conception, and now at last the Lord shows his care for them. A charming scene occurs just after the end of the reading: Sarah laughs at the idea of giving birth to a child at her age which leads to word-play when her son is named Isaac – which means laughs or smiles in Hebrew; this pun recurs several times in the Isaac story. For the sequel to the story, Abraham's bargain with God, we must wait till next week!

What does this story of Abraham and Sarah say to us about the life of faith, a life lived with God?

Second Reading: The Servant of the Church

Colossians 1:24-28

It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now, and in my body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church. I became the servant of the Church when God made me responsible for delivering God's message to you, the message which was a mystery hidden for generations and centuries and has now been revealed to his saints. It was God's purpose to reveal it to them and to show all the rich glory of this mystery to pagans. The mystery is Christ among you, your hope of glory: this is the Christ we proclaim, this is the wisdom in which we thoroughly train everyone and instruct everyone, to make them all perfect in Christ.

The letter to the Colossians, begun last Sunday and read over four Sundays, is one of the latest of the Pauline letters. Some scholars think it was written not by Paul at all but by a disciple, thoroughly familiar with Paul's thought, applying his master's ideas to a new situation. In any case, it is part of the inspired Scripture handed down to us. The mystery revealed only at the end of time, which Paul was commissioned to proclaim, is that the salvation promised to Abraham and his kin now extends to all people. The author is also very aware that Paul's own sufferings and tribulations in the apostolate mirror and complete those of Christ. When it says that Paul is 'completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions', the author does not mean that Jesus' Passion was somehow faulty or deficient. Rather he means that the Church (as the Body of Christ in every age) must be a suffering Church. His confidence rests in these sufferings, for they enable him to say that Paul is the Servant of the Lord Jesus in just the same way as Jesus is the Suffering Servant of the Lord. In 2 Corinthians, when others claim more authority than he has, Paul replies by saying that he has suffered more.

“ The salvation promised to Abraham and his kin now extends to all people. ”

Is suffering part of our mission as members of the Church? Why? How is this fulfilled?

The Wednesday Word: Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God
w: www.wednesdayword.org e: info@wednesdayword.org