



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 19th February 2017 - The Seventh 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 Sunday 19th February 2017 - Jesus completes the Law (Matthew 5:38-48)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You have learnt how it was said: Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I say this to you: offer the wicked man no resistance. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well; if a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with him. Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away. You have learnt how it was said: You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike. For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not? You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect.'



3 Reflect

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

Following on from the four adjustments of the Law in last Sunday's gospel come two more, perhaps the most demanding. The Law of Moses had limited revenge: only a tooth might be taken for a tooth, only an eye for an eye, not life itself. Jesus, however, will not tolerate even this limited vengeance; he allows no revenge at all. Again and again in the course of the gospel Jesus returns to this need for unconditional forgiveness. We daringly engage ourselves with this teaching whenever we say the Lord's Prayer, 'forgive us just as we forgive...'

The final demand, however, is the most challenging of all. There is in fact no passage of the canonical scripture which encourages 'hate your enemy'. In any case, just as God lavishes his benefits of life, sun and rain on good and evil alike, so we must put no limits to our love. Only in this way – think of the first reading! – can we attempt to honour and imitate the holiness of God. This is what it means to be a son of God, 'sons of your Father in heaven': only by following in his way and by fulfilling his designs can we be integrated into his family. There can be no enmity in Christianity.

Can I really forgive with no trace of animosity?

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 19th February 2017



First Reading: *Love of Neighbour*

Leviticus 19:1-2.17-18

The Lord spoke to Moses; he said: 'Speak to the whole community of the sons of Israel and say to them: "Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.

You must not bear hatred for your brother in your heart. You must openly tell him, your neighbour, of his offence; this way you will not take a sin upon yourself. You must not exact vengeance, nor must you bear a grudge against the children of your people. You must love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord."

This passage from Leviticus is taken from a series of regulations in the Law called the 'Holiness Code'. Israel, God's own People, must set about treasuring and imitating God's own holiness. So there are regulations which express the awesomeness of God by demanding reverence and care towards God's sanctuary and towards those special processes of life, conception, birth and death, where the presence of God breaks in upon human consciousness. God is felt to be especially present in the sacred moments of sex, when human beings combine to create life, and in the moments of passage to life and from life. There are also regulations which ensure that God's People treat the poor and unfortunate as God himself treated them when they were poor and down-trodden in Egypt. This is what it is to be holy as God is holy. In particular, among the individual members of God's People, there must never be vengeance but the same love and forgiveness which God himself shows to his People. Jesus himself will take up this demand not only in today's Gospel but also in the story of the Great Commandment, where he puts love of neighbour on the same level as love of God (Mark 12:28-34 and parallels in Matthew and Luke).

Do we honour God and recognise his divine presence in every moment of our lives?

Second Reading: *The Temple of God*

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Didn't you realise that you were God's temple and that the Spirit of God was living among you? If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy him, because the temple of God is sacred; and you are that temple. Make no mistake about it: if any one of you thinks of himself as wise, in the ordinary sense of the word, then he must learn to be a fool before he really can be wise. Why? Because the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As scripture says: The Lord knows wise men's thoughts: he knows how useless they are, or again: God is not convinced by the arguments of the wise. So there is nothing to boast about in anything human: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life and death, the present and the future, are all your servants; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.

“Every member of this holy Temple which belongs to Christ has its special part to play.”

Paul is coming to the conclusion of the first section of his letter to the Corinthians. He has been chiding them for their conceit in grouping into separate cliques, making themselves followers of the various Christian leaders who have taught them at Corinth. 'Cephas' ('Rock') is the Aramaic name for Peter, a name which also means 'Rock'; Apollos was a Jewish teacher from Alexandria. 'No!' says Paul. 'The human leaders (including myself) are nothing, but you all belong to Christ.' Paul aptly uses the analogy of building, for Corinth had recently been rebuilt and was continually expanding. The foundation of the building is Christ. Different materials may be used, but on the one foundation there is only one building. Furthermore, this is no ordinary building, but is the Temple of God. In it each stone is holy, because the Spirit of God lives in the Temple of the Christian community no less surely than the Spirit of God dwelt in the Temple of Jerusalem. Later in the letter Paul will develop this image to show that every element, every member of this holy Temple which belongs to Christ, has its special part to play. Each stone in the building is equally important.

Can a divided parish form a single Temple for God?

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

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