



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 7th May 2017 - The Fourth Sunday of Easter

1 Relax & Remember

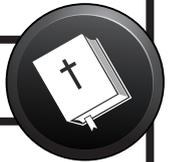
Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this 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 7th May 2017 - The Good Shepherd (John 10:1-10)

Jesus said: 'I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognise the voice of strangers.' Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by telling it to them. So Jesus spoke to them again: 'I tell you most solemnly, I am the gate of the sheepfold. All others who have come are thieves and brigands; but the sheep took no notice of them. I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe: he will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.'



3 Reflect

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

In each year of the three-year cycle of readings this fourth Sunday of Easter is designated Good Shepherd Sunday, with readings from the parable given in John 10. In the first two Sundays after Easter the meetings with the Risen Lord are described, but after that the most important truth about the Risen Lord which the Church puts before us is that this Jesus whom we encounter is the Good Shepherd. In the Old Testament God is the Shepherd of Israel, and indeed in the neighbouring pastoral nations too the protective deity of the nation is commonly called their 'Shepherd'. As the pastoral ancient world well knew, the duty of shepherds is to care devotedly for the sheep, with no regard to the personal cost to themselves. Ezekiel repeatedly castigates the recent leaders of Israel for their failure to care for the sheep and for managing the flock for their own personal advantage. It is especially striking that in all four gospels the divine title of Shepherd is transferred from God to Jesus himself, at least implying not only that Jesus is the perfect shepherd, but also that he is the incarnation of that divine Shepherd, fulfilling the duties which had hitherto been credited to the God of Israel alone. By his selfless generosity Jesus is the model for all rulers and leaders of nations.

What does it mean to you to describe Jesus as the Good Shepherd? Who is your special guide in life and why?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

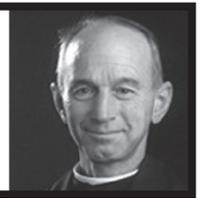
Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution 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 7th May 2017



First Reading: *The First Conversions*

Acts of the Apostles 2:14.36-41

On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd with a loud voice: 'The whole House of Israel can be certain that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.' Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the apostles, 'What must we do, brothers?' 'You must repent,' Peter answered, 'and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise that was made is for you and your children and for all those who are far away, for all those whom the Lord our God will call to himself.' He spoke to them for a long time using many arguments, and he urged them, 'Save yourselves from this perverse generation.' They were convinced by his arguments, and they accepted what he said and were baptised. That very day about three thousand were added to their number.

Last Sunday we heard Peter's explanation of the Resurrection as the fulfilment of God's plan which had been outlined in the scriptures. Now we hear the practical consequences: baptism to wash away sin and reception of the Holy Spirit (like Christ at his own baptism). From the very beginning Luke shows that baptism and the promises are for all people, not just for the Jews. All are welcome into Christ's company. But we must first understand what Peter (and before him Jesus and even John the Baptist) meant by 'repentance'. It is not a doleful moping over sin. It is a change of life, a complete change of our scale of values. The Greek word for 'repentance' means a changed mind-set. The corresponding Hebrew word means turning round and going in the opposite direction. 'Repentance', then, is a serious business, not to be undertaken lightly. Careful scrutiny reveals that we may well have unswept corners where the old standards remain lurking, breeding and reproducing. The Christian is baptised into Christ and into Christ's death in order to rise to new life with Christ, but even St Paul acknowledges that we remain caught up in doing the evil we want to avoid.

Is it possible to take on Christ's life and yet to sin? What helps us in our daily lives to repent and turn to face Christ?

Second Reading: *The Example of Christ*

1 Peter 2:20-25

The merit, in the sight of God, is in bearing punishment patiently when you are punished after doing your duty. This, in fact, is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered for you and left an example for you to follow the way he took. He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in his mouth. He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was tortured he made no threats but he put his trust in the righteous judge. He was bearing our faults in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness; through his wounds you have been healed. You had gone astray like sheep but now you have come back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

One of the most striking things about this passage is that it is addressed primarily to slaves, exhorting them to bear with the harsh treatment of their masters after the model of Jesus' own acceptance of harsh treatment. What is staggering for us is that the author does not in the least question the institution of slavery nor sees injustice in that savage treatment which slaves tended to receive. It was not for a millennium and a half that the treatment of slaves and indeed the institution of slavery itself were seen to be incompatible with Christ's teaching on the equal dignity and limitless value of every individual human being. As Pope Benedict pointed out on his visit to Britain in 2010, the extension of this important principle of social justice to slaves is due to the work of Christian political movements in Britain. However, another principle underpinning our reading remains - that we all suffer to a greater or lesser degree, and that our suffering offers a priceless opportunity to draw close to the suffering Christ, and consciously to share in his redemptive suffering. Nor must the suffering of others in union with Christ be neglected. It is easy to despise the poorer and more neglected members of society, and to forget that, by their very disadvantages, they can be the chosen favourites of the Lord.

How easy is it to follow the example of the suffering Christ?

“ A priceless opportunity to draw close to the suffering Christ. ”

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

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