



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 21st May 2017 - 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 21st May 2017 - The Advocate whom the Father will send (John 14:15-21)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If you love me you will keep my commandments. I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you for ever, that Spirit of truth whom the world can never receive since it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he is with you, he is in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you. In a short time the world will no longer see me; but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will understand that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you. Anybody who receives my commandments and keeps them will be one who loves me; and anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and show myself to him.'



3 Reflect

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

Only in John's Gospel is the Spirit whom the Father will send called 'the Advocate' or 'the Paraclete'. Both names have the same derivation and the same meaning, but the former is from the Latin language, the latter from the Greek. It means someone 'called to one's side' as a helper, principally as a defender in a lawsuit. The word 'Paraclete' also suggests comfort and strength, as implied in the quality 'paraclesis' or perseverance. In the discourse after the Last Supper, when Jesus is preparing his disciples for their future task, there are four separate sayings about the Paraclete. The Paraclete is sent both by Jesus and by the Father, but always from the Father's side. The Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, will teach the disciples everything and lead them into all truth, witnessing to the Father. The Paraclete is 'another Paraclete', that is, other than Jesus, who will make Jesus present when Jesus is no longer physically with the disciples. The close link and interplay between these three figures (Father, Son and Spirit) gives us not only the beginnings of the theology of the Trinity, but also a lasting confidence that Jesus is never absent from his Church. With the guidance and patronage of the Paraclete the Church enters more and more deeply into the understanding of the divine mystery.

Why do we need a Paraclete to guide us?

Reflection: Open yourself to the guidance of the Paraclete. Allow the Paraclete to lead you further into the life of the Trinity.

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 21st May 2017



First Reading: *The Gospel Spreads to Samaria*

Acts of the Apostles 8:5-8. 14-17

Philip went to a Samaritan town and proclaimed the Christ to them. The people united in welcoming the message Philip preached, either because they had heard of the miracles he worked or because they saw them for themselves. There were, for example, unclean spirits that came shrieking out of many who were possessed, and several paralytics and cripples were cured. As a result there was great rejoicing in that town. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, and they went down there, and prayed for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he had not come down on any of them: they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

The story of Acts is the story of the spread of the Gospel to 'the ends of the earth'. The first few chapters described the ideal Church at Jerusalem. That ideal was shattered by the persecution which erupted and led to Stephen's martyrdom. We missed out that story, reserving it for St Stephen's feast on Boxing Day. Things get too hot in Jerusalem itself, and the effect is that the Word of the Lord begins to spread beyond the city, first to Samaria, the country region just north of Jerusalem. The peace of God's Kingdom comes to the Samaritans in the form of liberation from sickness and the torment of various diseases. Luke notes for us the joy which this brings, a joy which is the sign of the Kingship of God. It is notable that the distinction between the gift of faith and the fuller gift of the Spirit is already marked in this reading just as the modern Church distinguishes between baptism and confirmation. The apostles lay their hands on those who are to receive the Spirit, just as nowadays the bishop (who signifies the unity of the Church and acts as the successor of the apostles) comes to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Reflection: *What does the presence of the Spirit bring to your own life and the life of the Church?*

Second Reading: *Defence of the Faith*

1 Peter 3:15-18

Reverence the Lord Christ in your hearts, and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have. But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience, so that those who slander you when you are living a good life in Christ may be proved wrong in the accusations that they bring. And if it is the will of God that you should suffer, it is better to suffer for doing right than for doing wrong. Why, Christ himself, innocent though he was, had died once for sins, died for the guilty, to lead us to God. In the body he was put to death, in the spirit he was raised to life.

This final reading from the first Letter of Peter gives a heartening model for defence in persecution. In modern Western society any persecution faced is more likely to be verbal mockery or contempt than blood-shedding. A Christian stance on moral issues can so easily incur charges of narrow-mindedness or blindness. It is not always easy to keep one's temper and give a fair and helpful reply 'with courtesy and respect', expressing the consequences of the Christian hope. Such a reply just might strike a chord deep down, rather than an explosive or sarcastic riposte, which merely deepens the divide. 'Reverence' for others can be a real and important Christian witness. The final sentences of the reading are helpful here, for the accounts of Jesus' trial stress that Jesus himself was silent 'like a lamb before its shearers' as the Suffering Servant of the Lord, in fulfilment of the scriptures. The passion account is full of irony and mockery, from the High Priest, from Pilate, from the soldiers; if Jesus himself did not explode at the false accusations and mockery, but retained his dignified silence, we too should keep our cool and reply to our 'accusers' with courtesy.

How do you reply to mockery of the Catholic or Christian stance?

“Keep your cool and reply with courtesy.”

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

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