



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 16th July 2017 - The Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Relax & Remember

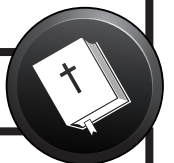
Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this 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 16th July 2017 - The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9)

Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, but such crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people all stood on the beach, and he told them many things in parables. He said, 'Imagine a sower going out to sow. As he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up straight away, because there was no depth of earth; but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away. Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Listen, anyone who has ears!'



3 Reflect

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

Like any good teacher, Jesus uses pictures – or parables. Ever heard the one about the elephant and the wasp? Or electricity like a toy train going round a room? Anyway, for the next three weeks we have some of these pictures, to show us what Jesus is trying to do. This first one is rather sad. Whatever the sower does seems to fail: seed pecked up by birds, scorched by the sun, choked by thistles. What are my pecking birds, my scorching sun, my choking thistles which annihilate the seed Jesus sows in me? It's probably different for every one of us. But some, just a little, of the seed bears a fantastic harvest. There must be something I can show to the Lord with pride and gratitude: 'Look, this is the seed you gave me; it has grown, developed, and here is your harvest.' Jesus, too, reflected on his mission to establish his Father's sovereignty on earth. Jesus, too, may well have wondered if he was getting anywhere. It was only when he had failed utterly, alone, deserted and tortured, that his perseverance won the crown. Jesus doesn't want the successful. He wants the failures as his followers – and that is where the harvest lies.

In Jesus' story what is the seed? What prevents the seed reaching its full growth in me? In what way has the seed made me a better person?

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 16th July 2017



First Reading: *The Effective Word of God*

Isaiah 55:10-11

Thus says the Lord: 'As the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.'

This poetic passage from Isaiah about the word of God may be understood on two levels. On one level it prepares for Jesus' parable in the Gospel reading about the sower and the seed. But while Isaiah stresses the effectiveness of the word of God, Jesus reflects on the failure of his word with many sections of his hearers, as well as on the brilliant success of his word in those who bear fruit 'thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold'. On another level this passage prepares us for the meditation on the Word of God in the prologue to the Gospel of John: 'In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God and the Word was God.' This helps to explain just how God, the awesome and inexpressible, can be manifested and active in creation. In Genesis God created by his Word ('Let there be light!' 'Let there be a vault! etc.), so the Word is seen not as something separate from and independent of God, but as the concrete expression of God's will, the manifestation of divine power. The Word which comes forth from God's mouth and does not return unfulfilled is, on this level, the creative power of God, unstopably fulfilling the will of God in the world.

How is God's Word at work in creation?

Second Reading: *Creation Freed from Corruption*

Romans 8:18-23

I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory, as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us. The whole creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal his sons. It was not for any fault on the part of creation that it was made unable to attain its purpose, it was made so by God; but creation still retains the hope of being freed, like us, from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God. From the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free.

In our reading of Romans 8 on life in the Spirit of the Risen Christ we have missed out a few crucial verses (they are used on a separate occasion) on our adoption as sons, enabling us – both men and women – to call God 'Abba', 'Father'. This intimate Aramaic family name, used by Jesus to his Father in his agonized prayer in the Garden (Mark 14:36), can be used by all his followers who share his life. With Jesus we are heirs of God, sharing his inheritance. Not only ourselves, however, but the whole of creation is renewed and re-created by the Spirit. It all takes on a new dimension and a new life, groaning in the Spirit to be released from frustration. This is a new reason for human beings (now renewed in Christ) to care for God's creation. In the first place we were created in the image of God to further and to complete his creation. Now, re-created as adopted sons and heirs of God, our responsibility is increased and intensified. As yet, we have only the first-fruits of the Spirit, but first-fruits make sense and have their value only in view of the fullness and completion of the harvest.

What is our responsibility as heirs of God?

“With Jesus we are heirs of God, sharing his inheritance.”

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

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