



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 4th February 2018 - The Fifth 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 4th February 2018 (Mark 1:29-39): Jesus at Capernaum

On leaving the synagogue, Jesus went with James and John straight to the house of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law had gone to bed with fever, and they told him about her straightaway. He went to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her and she began to wait on them. That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were possessed by devils. The whole town came crowding round the door, and he cured many who were suffering from diseases of one kind or another; he also cast out many devils, but he would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was. In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. Simon and his companions set out in search of him, and when they found him they said, "Everybody is looking for you." He answered, "Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can preach there too, because that is why I came." And he went all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out devils.



3 Reflect

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

The snippets gathered in the gospel reading give us a sample of Jesus' activity at Capernaum – healing and prayer. The first incident, the healing of the relative of his friend and follower Simon Peter, reminds us that Jesus does respond if we pray for the needs of our nearest and dearest. Then the summary of his evening activity shows his concern to bring healing and wholeness. Any Christian will desire to follow his example: we can harm or heal those around us in so many ways. It does not need to be a miracle! A greeting, a look, a smile, a touch can bring the peace of Christ to someone in desperate need of reassurance - and no less can these actions harm and wound. But the third little story, of Jesus going off to pray in the early morning, shows that the well-spring of all his activity was his union with God whom he called his Father. We cannot say what Jesus' prayer was, any more than I can say what your prayer is, but the confident communication between Father and Son must have been the source of his strength and compassion.

What sort of things can you do to bring healing to others? Where do you find it easiest to pray?

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.**



WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †



Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 4th February 2018

First Reading: *Job's Suffering*

Job 7:1-4. 6-7

Job began to speak: Is not man's life on earth nothing more than pressed service, his time no better than hired drudgery? Like the slave, sighing for the shade, or the workman with no thought but his wages; months of delusion I have assigned to me, nothing for my own but nights of grief. Lying in bed I wonder, "When will it be day?" Risen I think, "How slowly evening comes!" Restlessly I fret till twilight falls. Swifter than a weaver's shuttle my days have passed, and vanished, leaving no hope behind. Remember that my life is but a breath, and that my eyes will never again see joy.

In the whole three-year cycle there are only two Sunday readings from the moving and tragic Book of Job. The Book describes the problem of sickness and suffering at its most acute: why should I suffer? Job has lost everything - wealth, family, health. He sits on a rubbish-heap, scratching his sores with a broken pot. In this passage from chapter 7 he gives a painful picture of the sick person's frustration - the slow and pointless passage of time, the crazy, distorted imaginings. He feels that God is oppressing him, but yet clings to God as his one hope of release. Undeserved sickness and death is worrying for anyone who believes in a loving God. On the natural plane, sickness is a reminder that things are out of order and could get worse. To the believer it is a reminder that this brilliant, complicated, sophisticated creation cannot continue developing for ever, but must return to God in God's own good time. As Jeremiah explains, the pot cannot complain to the potter, "Why did you make me like this?" But couldn't a loving God have made something so that it never went wrong?

Why does our confidence in God so easily give way to fear and mistrust? Why does God allow suffering in our world?

Second Reading: *Paul, the Servant of All*

1 Corinthians 9:16-19. 22-23

I do not boast of preaching the gospel, since it is a duty which has been laid on me; I should be punished if I did not preach it! If I had chosen this work myself, I might have been paid for it, but as I have not, it is a responsibility which has been put into my hands. Do you know what my reward is? It is this: in my preaching, to be able to offer the Good News free, and not insist on the rights which the gospel gives me. So though I am not a slave of any man I have made myself the slave of everyone so as to win as many as I could. For the weak I made myself weak. I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost; and I still do this, for the sake of the gospel, to have a share in its blessing.

As we work through this letter to the Christians of Corinth we find Paul reflecting on his own task. His teaching is firm enough. Under the compulsion of his divine call he has no choice but to teach the truth. Yet in his desire to win the Corinthians for Christ, he is sensitive to the needs of all people. Here he has just been giving a ruling on whether it is allowed to eat food which has been dedicated to pagan gods. His first point is that, as these gods don't exist, dedication to them does not affect the food. But his most important point is that you must not upset other people's consciences. In other words, the overriding principle is to be sensitive and caring towards the needs of each person. If we are anxious to do the right thing, we can often be quite hard about acting 'on principle', trampling on the feelings of others without regard for their own sincerely-held beliefs. For Paul the highest principle in his treatment of people is always love.

How do we best respect other people?

“Paul's most important point is that you must not upset other people's consciences.”

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