



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 4th March 2018 - The Third Sunday of Lent

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 March 2018 (John 2:13-25): The Cleansing of the Temple

Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting at their counters there. Making a whip out of some cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon-sellers, "Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market." Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: Zeal for your house will devour me. The Jews intervened and said, "What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?" Jesus answered, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the words he had said. During his stay in Jerusalem for the Passover many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he gave, but Jesus knew them all and did not trust himself to them; he never needed evidence about any man; he could tell what a man had in him.



3 Reflect

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

According to John, this scene took place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, on the first of Jesus' four visits to Jerusalem. At each subsequent visit the Temple authorities lay in wait for Jesus, increasingly keen to eliminate him, but unable to do so till his Hour had come. The other gospels place both this incident and all other scenes of Jesus in Jerusalem as the final climax of Jesus' ministry. Whichever is correct, the incident is the basic cause of Jesus' arrest and his tortured death. By his action Jesus had demonstrated that the worship carried out in the Temple had become vain in God's eyes owing to its lack of integrity and must be superseded. To the Temple authorities this was intolerable, and he must be removed. Again, Jesus demanded a complete reversal of standards. His puzzling saying about building the Temple anew in his body was at last understood by his disciples after his resurrection when they realised it meant the Temple that was his Body, the Church. The material building which had been the centre of worship was no longer important. Henceforth all worship would take place in any place, but within the Christian community. The community - or the Church - was now the place of sanctification and of prayer to God.

What does it mean to think of the Church as Jesus' Body? What does it mean to you to be a member of Christ's Body, the Church?

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 March 2018



First Reading: *The Ten Commandments*

Exodus 20:1-17 (shorter form)

God spoke all these words. He said, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no gods except me. You shall not utter the name of the Lord your God to misuse it, for the Lord will not leave unpunished the man who utters his name to misuse it. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Honour your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God has given to you. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his servant, man or woman, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is his."

The Ten Commandments are not harsh rules, but an invitation to Israel, showing them how to be God's people: if you wish to keep close to God, you must behave in a way compatible with God's own nature. They come in an order which may surprise us perhaps, opposite to the priorities of the modern materialistic world: for God comes first, then they deal with the value of persons; the value of things and possessions comes only at the end. We need to think of the commandments not as prohibitions but as expressing positive values. So 'keep holy the Sabbath day' implies freedom of worship and freedom for leisure. 'Honour your parents' includes not only obedience of children, but real parental care for children and of adult children for aged parents, as well as other family values. 'No adultery' means fostering the marriage bond and continually deepening it. 'No false witness' includes the right to free speech, and giving others a good reputation, free of slander - no brainwashing or distortion by the media. Many of these laws occur in other ancient law-codes, but in Israel they have a special meaning, for here they are the guidelines for living under divine protection and in the company of the Lord.

How do these Ten Commandments help you to live more closely day by day with the Lord?

Second Reading: *The Scandal of the Cross*

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

While the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom, here are we preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans madness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

“We receive strength and comfort from the reassurance of the model of Christ.”

This reading is all about power and wisdom: 'the Jews demand miracles (works of power) and the Greeks look for wisdom'. These are two measures of success in the normal terms of our modern materialistic society. Power comes in the form of wealth, authority, command, being the boss. Wisdom results in the respect and reputation we accord to particular people: he or she is someone who makes the right decisions. But where do we find 'power' and 'wisdom' in the crucified Christ? He was a prisoner, powerless, horribly tortured, mocked and derided. He commanded nobody. Surely there is nothing we can respect about a tortured prisoner? God's standards are different, and we heard them in the form of the commandments in the first reading. It was these standards that brought Jesus to the situation of the Passion, for these were the standards he had sought to live out and show to people by his way of living and acting. This way was the Kingship of God which he came to proclaim and to spread. In the first reading we heard the demanding, positive standards for membership of God's people. Now in this second reading we receive strength and comfort from the reassurance of the model of Christ.

Where do you find your source of true wisdom and strength?

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