



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 7th October 2018 - The Twenty Seventh 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 7th October 2018 (Mark 10:2-16): Two Become One Flesh

Some Pharisees approached Jesus and asked, "Is it against the law for a man to divorce his wife?" They were testing him. He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" "Moses allowed us," they said, "to draw up a writ of dismissal and so to divorce." Then Jesus said to them, "It was because you were so unteachable that he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. This is why a man must leave father and mother, and the two become one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide." Back in the house the disciples questioned him again about this, and he said to them, "The man who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too." People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Then he put his arms round them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.



3 Reflect

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

The Pharisees are putting a trick question to Jesus, as is clear in Matthew's fuller account in his gospel. They knew the Law, which permitted divorce, and they will quote this Law to Jesus. The Law allowed divorce for 'indecent', but teachers were divided about what this meant: did it mean adultery or a lesser fault? So their real question is: what does Jesus consider grounds for divorce? As so frequently in his discussions with the legal experts, Jesus' response goes beyond and much deeper than a simple answer to the question: God made man and woman such that they should bond together permanently and become one thinking, living being. The word used for one 'body', or one 'flesh', really means one entity, not a hunk of meat, but a single, vibrant personality. God's intention was not that the two should be separable again. So Jesus does not answer the question about grounds for divorce at all. It is striking that here – and on other occasions too – Jesus' authority is such that he feels able to alter the sacred Law of Moses. For the Jews the Law of Moses was God's own gift, sacred and unalterable by any human authority. By altering it, by annulling the permission for divorce under certain circumstances, Jesus is implicitly claiming divine authority.

What does Jesus teach about marriage? And what does his welcoming of the children have to say about God's kingdom?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

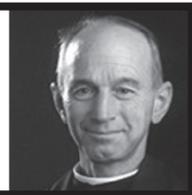
4 Respond & Request

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 7th October 2018



First Reading: *God gives Man a Partner*

Genesis 2:18-24

The Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helpmate." So from the soil the Lord God fashioned all the wild beasts and all the birds of heaven. These he brought to the man to see what he would call them; each one was to bear the name the man would give it. The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of heaven and all the wild beasts. But no helpmate suitable for man was found for him. So the Lord God made the man fall into a deep sleep. And while he slept, he took one of his ribs and enclosed it in flesh. The Lord God built the rib he had taken from the man into a woman, and brought her to the man. The man exclaimed, "This at last is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh! This is to be called woman, for this was taken from man." This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife, and they become one body.

The stories at the beginning of Genesis are intended to explain how God designed things and what their purpose is. The stories are, of course, not meant to be historical, but their teaching is of the highest importance: they show how things were meant to be. By giving the animals their names the Man is taking part in their creation. Made in the image of God, the Man's task is to promote God's work and foster creation and foster life, just as God himself does. The creation of human beings is the climax of creation, which means that human beings have a responsibility towards the rest of creation. The warm relationship between God and the Man before the Fall is particularly touching. God's care for the Man, putting him to sleep before the surgical operation which produces Woman, with God himself sewing up the wound, is delightful. So is God's careful moulding of the Woman and the presentation of his handiwork to the Man. It is important to see that there is no unevenness, no inequality between the sexes; each is personally moulded by God. The author paints word-pictures; the welcoming between the Woman and the Man is the author's way of showing that the bonding between them in marriage is a divine institution.

What does this story from Genesis say to us about the relationship between the sexes, and about our relationship with God?

Second Reading: *The Leader to Salvation*

Hebrews 2:9-11

We see in Jesus one who was for a short while made lower than the angels and is now crowned with glory and splendour because he submitted to death; by God's grace he had to experience death for all mankind. As it was his purpose to bring a great many of his sons into glory, it was appropriate that God, for whom everything exists and through whom everything exists, should make perfect, through suffering, the leader who would take them to their salvation. For the one who sanctifies, and the ones who are sanctified, are of the same stock; that is why he openly calls them brothers.

“By being made perfect Jesus leads all his brothers and sisters to the same perfection.”

The Letter to the Hebrews is going to be read during Mass for the next seven Sundays, right up until Advent. Its author is completely unknown, but it is very likely that the letter was written for Hebrew priests, who had become Christians and were missing the traditional rites of their people. It assumes knowledge of the Jewish ritual, and, with many allusions to scripture, it highlights two themes. Firstly, it shows that the Jewish sacrificial rituals were a pale shadow, but that their reality and fulfilment comes in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. Secondly, it points out that the People of God are still on pilgrimage. God's promise that they would reach a place of rest was not fulfilled by their arrival in the Holy Land under Joshua; it will be fulfilled only in heaven. In today's reading we glimpse part of the first theme. Jesus humbled himself to become man, only a little less than the angels (the author is alluding to Psalm 8), in order to become perfect through his suffering. He had to become fully human, so that by being made perfect he might lead all his brothers and sisters to the same perfection.

What does it mean when it says that Jesus became "perfect" through suffering? How do we too become "perfect"?

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