



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 19th February 2012 - The 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 Sunday 19th February 2012 (Mark 2:1-12): The Double Cure of the Paralytic

When Jesus returned to Capernaum, word went round that he was back; and so many people collected that there was no room left, even in front of the door. He was preaching the word to them when some people came bringing him a paralytic carried by four men, but as the crowds made it impossible to get the man to him, they stripped the roof over the place where Jesus was; and when they had made an opening, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic lay. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "My child, your sins are forgiven." Now some scribes were sitting there, and they thought to themselves, "How can this man talk like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God?" Jesus, inwardly aware that this was what they were thinking, said to them, "Why do you have these thoughts in your hearts? Which of these is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say, 'Get up, pick up your stretcher and walk?' But to prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins," - he said to the paralytic - "I order you: get up, pick up your stretcher, and go off home." And the man got up, picked up his stretcher at once and walked out in front of everyone, so that they were all astounded and praised God saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

3 Reflect

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

This gospel recounts a double healing because the sick man is cured of both sin and disease. Mark often relates his stories in 'sandwiches', that is, he puts one story between two halves of another story (like the ham in a burger). Later on, in Jesus' Jerusalem ministry, the Cleansing of the Temple is sandwiched between the Cursing and the Withering of the Fig-tree to show its significance: the fig-tree of Israel is withered. In this case the 'ham' is the forgiveness of sin. The 'bap' is the physical cure. The two stories gain significance by being sandwiched together, since the visible cure is evidence for the invisible forgiveness. The link joining the two stories is 'Jesus said to the paralytic' in verses 5 and 10-11. The scandalized scribes focus only on the ham-story, which seems to them blasphemous. Indeed, it is, and deliberately so! They are right that only God can forgive sins, for sin injures God's world in a way which finally only God can put right. By linking his healing with forgiveness of sins, our understanding as readers of who Jesus really is begins to grow, until we reach the conclusion that he is God among us.

Is there any sin which cannot be forgiven? Is there any sin which you can't forgive?

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 19th February 2012



First Reading: *The Forgiveness of Israel*

Isaiah 43:18-19. 21-22. 24-25

Thus says the Lord: No need to recall the past, no need to think about what was done before. See, I am doing a new deed; even now it comes to light; can you not see it? Yes, I am making a road in the wilderness, paths in the wilds. The people I have formed for myself will sing my praises. Jacob, you have not invoked me, you have not troubled yourself, Israel, on my behalf. Instead you have burdened me with your sins, troubled me with your iniquities. I it is, I it is, who must blot out everything and not remember your sins.

This reading is taken from the second part of the prophecies of Isaiah, written during Israel's Exile in Babylon in the 6th century BC, but when they were already expecting their release from captivity after seventy years of slavery. The banner-headline for the captives is 'Console my people; they have received double punishment for all her sins' by their exile and enslavement. The prophet makes no secret of Israel's infidelities, but details their slackness and the limitations of their sacrificial rituals. Nevertheless the prophet protests that the Lord will take no more notice of such failings. Instead he will guide the people across the desert, even renewing the wonders of the Exodus, by making 'a road in the desert and water in wastelands' as when he led his people out at the Exodus from Egypt. The gospel sees the fulfilment of this prophecy in Jesus when St Mark quotes Isaiah: 'A voice crying in the desert, "Make his paths straight"'. The Church sees the fulfilment of the prophecy in Jesus by pairing this reading with the gospel reading about Jesus' forgiveness of sin.

How easy do you find it to let go of the past and know, through Confession, that your sins are forgiven?

Second Reading: *Jesus, the 'Yes' of God*

2 Corinthians 1:18-22

I swear by God's truth, there is no Yes and No about what we say to you. The Son of God, the Christ Jesus that we proclaimed among you – I mean Silvanus and Timothy and I - was never Yes and No: with him it was always Yes, and however many the promises God made, the Yes to them all is in him. That is why it is 'through him' that we answer Amen to the praise of God. Remember it is God himself who assures us all, and you, of our standing in Christ, and has anointed us, marking us with his seal and giving us the pledge, the Spirit, that we carry in our hearts.

“ Christ is the 'Yes' of the Father's promises. ”

This is the first of eight consecutive Sunday readings from Second Corinthians, interrupted this year by the seasons of Lent and Easter. Paul is explaining to the Corinthians why he did not fulfil his promise to visit them again, and insists that he does not say 'Yes' and 'No' at the same time. (He goes on to say that he changed his plans in order to spare them a severe rebuke, since they had rejected and insulted his messenger). On the contrary, he follows the trustworthiness of God's own promises in Christ, who is the 'Yes' of the Father's promises. Paul uses a neat play on words, for the Hebrew word 'Amen' means 'Yes' or 'Firm'. When we say 'Amen' to someone's prayer we signify our agreement. In just the same way, Christ is the 'Yes' of God's promises, bringing them to completion. When he says 'it is through him that we answer "Amen"', Paul may be referring to the Great Amen at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer.

What or who helps you to be firm in faith, trusting in God and his promises?

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