



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 21st April 2013 - The Fourth Sunday of Easter

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 21st April 2013 (John 10:27-30): Jesus the Good Shepherd

Jesus said, "The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from me. The Father who gave them to me is greater than anyone, and no one can steal from the Father. The Father and I are one."

3 Reflect

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

Jesus' teaching on the Good Shepherd is the nearest saying approaching a parable in John's gospel. It is so important that the Church puts it before us on the fourth Sunday of Easter in each of the three cycles of readings. Apart from its obvious sense of Jesus looking after his sheep – and silly, confused sheep at that – this image receives special meaning from the figure of the shepherd in the Old Testament. God is the primary shepherd of Israel, who pastures his sheep in pastures green so that they fear no evil (Psalm 23). In Ezekiel 34 God promises to free Israel from the self-centred shepherds who keep the sheep for their own advantage, and to send them a true shepherd after his own heart, a second King David, who will tend them as God himself would care for them. Thus, in putting before us each year in Eastertide this proclamation that Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the Church is affirming the risen Christ as the divine Shepherd who tends his flocks. Particularly in these verses we see the unity of the risen Christ and the Father in their role of shepherds of the sheep, just as in our second reading from the Book of Revelation we see the unity of the LORD God and the Lamb, both revered on the one throne.

What is involved in imitating Christ as shepherd?

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 21st April 2013



First Reading: *Paul Turns to the Gentiles*

Acts 13:14. 43-52

Paul and Barnabas carried on from Perga till they reached Antioch in Pisidia. Here they went to synagogue on the sabbath and took their seats. When the meeting broke up, many Jews and devout converts joined Paul and Barnabas, and in their talks with them Paul and Barnabas urged them to remain faithful to the grace God had given them. The next sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of God. When they saw the crowds, the Jews, prompted by jealousy, used blasphemies and contradicted everything Paul said. Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, "We had to proclaim the word of God to you first, but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, we must turn to the pagans. For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said, "I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth." It made the pagans very happy to hear this and they thanked the Lord for his message; all who were destined for eternal life became believers. Thus the word of the Lord spread through the whole countryside. But the Jews worked upon some of the devout women of the upper classes and the leading men of the city and persuaded them to turn against Paul and Barnabas and expel them from their territory. So they shook the dust from their feet in defiance and went off to Iconium; but the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

In the Acts of the Apostles we witness the Christian message spreading to the ends of the earth. Yet three times Paul, as he does this, is rejected by his own people, the Jews, and forced to turn to the gentiles: once here in Asia Minor, once in Greece and finally in Rome. Each time he does so with a biblical gesture, shaking the dust off his feet, shaking out his cloak, finally in Rome quoting the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah ('You will indeed listen, but never understand ...'). Perhaps in God's providence this Jewish rejection of Paul's preaching was the means by which the Gospel reached beyond Judaism.

What can I do to help the mission to bring Christ (like Paul) to all nations?

Second Reading: *The Innumerable Gathering of the Redeemed*

Revelation 7:9. 14-17

I, John, saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands. One of the elders said to me, "These are the people who have been through the great persecution, and because they have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb, they now stand in front of God's throne and serve him day and night in his sanctuary; and the One who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will never hunger or thirst again; neither the sun nor scorching wind will ever plague them, because the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes."

In his vision John sees the countless numbers of the redeemed as they will be gathered at the throne of the Lamb. Their palms are the palms of victory and their robes, curiously washed white in blood, are the sign of integrity and innocence. The Book of Revelation was written at a time, whether of bloody persecution or not, when the temptation was overwhelming to submit to the dominance of Rome. This was not only political subjection but religious too, for the Lord Emperor was worshipped as a god. In every city there was an altar to Rome and to Augustus: the greater the city, the greater the temple. Worship of the Emperor and Rome set the whole tone for society. To join this worship was the only way to success and prosperity. Yet if Augustus is Lord, Christ cannot be LORD. Christians had to opt out of the emperor cult, and many paid with their blood. The victory was not by arms but by endurance. Today also there are many practices and beliefs in our society which Christians must opt out of – and yet we must also vigorously opt in, to bring the Christian values as a leavening of society.

Do I give too much ground to the idols and standards of contemporary society?

“Bring the Christian values as a leavening of society.”

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