



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 1st December 2013 - The First Sunday of Advent

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

The Gospel for Sunday 1st December 2013 - Like a Thief in the Night (Matthew 24:37-44)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'As it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of Man comes. For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and they suspected nothing till the Flood came and swept all away. It will be like this when the Son of Man comes. Then of two men in the fields one is taken, one left; of two women at the millstone grinding, one is taken, one left. So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this that if the house-holder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

3 Reflect

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

In each year of the three-year cycle the Advent Sunday gospel-readings have the same pattern: the first is about the final Coming of Christ. In the second John the Baptist is preparing a community of repentance to welcome Jesus' mission. In the third John the Baptist points out Jesus as the Messiah. On the fourth Sunday we look to Mary preparing for the birth of her Son. In this Sunday's reading about the Second Coming the accent is the same as in the Paul's letter to the Romans (today's second reading): we have a pressing and urgent need to take action without delay. The Second Coming will be sudden and unexpected as when a thief breaks in at night and no protective preparations have been made; it will also seem random and apparently without discernible cause, as when one person is taken, another left behind. We do not even know whether that final confrontation (when each of us is brought face to face with the awesome presence of God) will be a unique event for each of us at death, or whether it will be a group event, as is suggested by Matthew's parable of the sheep and goats sent to right and left. There is no time in eternity, no waiting-room! It will not be as any human mind can envisage it.

Should we look forward to or dread the final meeting with the Lord?

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 1st December 2013



First Reading: *The Vision of Peace*

Isaiah 2:1-5

The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In the days to come the mountain of the Temple of the Lord shall tower above the mountains and be lifted higher than the hills. All the nations will stream to it, peoples without number will come to it; and they will say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Jacob that he may teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths; since the Law will go out from Zion, and the oracle of the Lord from Jerusalem.' He will wield authority over the nations and adjudicate between many peoples; these will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation; there will be no more training for war. O House of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

With the beginning of Advent we focus on the coming of Christ, in history (that is, at Bethlehem), in mystery (that is, in the Church) and in majesty (that is, at the end of time). Today's first reading helps us to reflect on the peace which Christ brings, and for which we all yearn. The hill on which Jerusalem lies is not a particularly high one, but when Christ comes it will become like a towering mountain (as in Isaiah's vision), dominating the whole country. All nations will realise its importance and come to Jerusalem as the source of all salvation. Teaching about the salvation of the gentiles, which first comes to the fore in the writings after the exile in Babylon, reaches a high-point in today's reading. The permanent ending of war and strife is signalled by the re-moulding of the weapons of war. You can't make war if you have converted your tanks into chicken-houses and your aircraft-carriers into skateboard-parks – the modern equivalent of swords into ploughshares and spears into sickles. So Advent is a time of peace, peace between nations but also peace between families and within families, a time for reconciliation of quarrels as we prepare for the coming of Christ at Christmas.

What can I do this Advent to increase peace?

Second Reading: *The Time is Near*

Romans 13:11-14

You know 'the time' has come: you must wake up now: our salvation is even nearer than it was when we were converted. The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon – let us give up all the things we prefer to do under cover of the dark; let us arm ourselves and appear in the light. Let us live decently as people do in the daytime: no drunken orgies, no promiscuity or licentiousness, and no wrangling or jealousy. Let your armour be the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Each year there must really be a coming of Christ into our lives and our society.”

After his great exposition in the Letter to the Romans about the saving work of Christ, Paul goes on to encourage the Christians of Rome to be faithful. With the Resurrection the final era of the world has begun. There is no room for delay: the night is nearly over and the children of light are coming into their own. Paul sees a pressing need for action, and much of his moral advice, especially in First Corinthians, is grounded on the assumption that the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the world is imminent. Did Paul get it wrong? He never says exactly how imminent it is, how soon the Second Coming will occur, but we can safely say that he would have been surprised to discover that two thousand years would pass without any sign of it happening. However, it is equally safe to say that timing is not his concern. The Second Coming remains imminent, in that there is no time to delay in mending our ways and preparing for this event. We are given an important reminder of this by our celebration of Christmas. Each year there must really be a coming of Christ into our lives and our society.

How can Christmas be to me a coming of Christ?

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