Wednesday 15th July 2015 - **A WEEKLY PRAYER CUSTOM**

THE WEDNESDAY WORD
The Parish Version

Encountering Christ
Prayerfully preparing for the Sunday Mass and praying in particular for our school families

Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 19th July 2015 - The Sixteenth Sunday of 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 19th July 2015 (Mark 6:30-34): Gathering to be Fed

The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, "You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while"; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But people saw them going, and many could guess where; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length.

3 Reflect

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

Today we begin a series of six Sunday gospels on the Eucharist. As this year's gospel (Mark) is too short to provide readings for the whole year, the Church takes five Sunday readings from the Bread of Life Discourse in John's Gospel, introducing them with the account of the Feeding in Mark's Gospel. The story of the Feeding can be read on several levels. The event is a foretaste of the Eucharist, with the disciples gathered round Jesus as the new Israel (12 baskets for the 12 tribes) for a fully satisfying meal, the messianic banquet. Furthermore, Jesus is the good shepherd who feeds his flock, according to Psalm 23, on the green pastures beside the restful waters of the Lake of Galilee. Jesus is also the prophet like Moses who provides manna for his people in the desert or, more precisely, he is like Elisha in 2 Kings 4 (next Sunday's first reading). The story in Mark's account of the Feeding is recounted in terms which deliberately recall these and other biblical scenes, to enrich and deepen our understanding of what is happening. ***How does this reading help you understand how the Lord gathers and prepares us to be fedthrough his gift of the Eucharist?***

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.**

The Wednesday Word is under the patronage of St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church
Within the tradition of the Catholic Church, each Wednesday is dedicated to St Joseph

WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS ✝

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 19th July 2015

First Reading: *The Lord will Shepherd Israel*

Jeremiah 23:1-6

"Doom for the shepherds who allow the flock of my pasture to be destroyed and scattered - it is the Lord who speaks! This, therefore, is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says about the shepherds in charge of my people: You have let my flock be scattered and go wandering and have not taken care of them. Right, I will take care of you for your misdeeds - it is the Lord who speaks! But the remnant of my flock I myself will gather from all the countries where I have dispersed them, and will bring them back to their pastures: they shall be fruitful and increase in numbers. I will raise up shepherds to look after them and pasture them; no fear, no terror for them any more; not one shall be lost - it is the Lord who speaks! See, the days are coming - it is the Lord who speaks - when I will raise a virtuous Branch for David, who will reign as true king and be wise, practising honesty and integrity in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel dwell in confidence. And this is the name he will be called: The Lord-our-integrity."

This reading is chosen with an eye to today's gospel. It is quite unlike so many passages in Jeremiah when he was obliged to prophesy doom and disaster for Israel. As well as doom for the current shepherds of the people, this reading foretells a time when the Lord himself will shepherd his people through his own shepherd, a king in the line of David. The promise may refer to God himself as the shepherd, or it may be God's representative who is the shepherd, or it may hint at both. The exile in Babylon must still come first, but that time will give way to the reign of 'The Lord-our-integrity'. This name is roughly equivalent to the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus, for the kingship of God is a kingship of God's justice and salvation. God's 'justice' is not like human justice, which consists in observance of and obedience to the law, whether it be the Jewish Law or Civil Law. God's justice consists in fidelity to his promises, the promises made originally to Abraham, and repeated to Moses and David, the repeatedly renewed covenant, the promise of patronage and protection, if only the people will put their trust in the Lord. This is what makes God's justice a saving justice, the hope of Israel, fulfilled in Jesus.

What does this prophecy of Jeremiah say to you about God's promises and how he will fulfil them?

Second Reading: *The Unity of Believers*

Ephesians 2:13-18

In Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far apart from us have been brought very close, by the blood of Christ. For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, actually destroying in his own person the hostility caused by the rules and decrees of the Law. This was to create one single New Man in himself out of the two of them and by restoring peace through the cross, to unite them both in a single Body and reconcile them with God. In his own person he killed the hostility. Later he came to bring the good news of peace, peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near at hand. Through him, both of us have in the one Spirit our way to come to the Father.

The Letter to the Ephesians celebrates the unity of the Church, returning again and again to this subject. In this passage the 'you that used to be so far off' denotes the gentiles, and the 'us' the Jews. The two groups of Christians, sprung from Jews and Gentiles, which formerly were so much at loggerheads, are united by the blood of Christ and the single Spirit to form the single New Man which is Christ's Body, the Church. The uniting of these two groups reminds us that Christ won salvation for the whole world. In some mysterious way all those who are saved are saved by Christ, even if they are not explicitly aware of this.

How may we better manifest and celebrate the unity of the Church?

> "Christ won salvation for the whole world."

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

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