



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 6th March 2016 - The Fourth Sunday in Lent

1 Relax & Remember

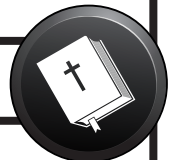
Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this 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 6th March 2016 - The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:1-3. 11-32)

Jesus spoke this parable to them: "A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery. When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine. So he left the place and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. And they began to celebrate. Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. 'Your brother has come,' replied the servant, 'and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound.' He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, 'Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property - he and his women - you kill the calf we had been fattening.' The father said, 'My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it is only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.'"



3 Reflect

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

Who is the hero of the story? What should its title be? Some call it the parable of the Powerless Father, for the father is powerless to do anything but welcome his son. Clearly the principal message of the parable is that we can count on God's forgiveness, whatever we do. The contrast is also between the two sons. The younger insults his father: all he thinks about is his inheritance, as though he wished his father already dead. All the same, the father is eagerly on the watch, and forgets all his dignity to run and welcome his returning son. And to persuade the elder son to join in the party, the father even leaves his dinner-guests at table, going out into the field to urge the jealous elder brother to join in. Forgiveness and love is his whole motivation. The elder son responds to his father with insults ('That son of yours' he says), inventing guesses about sexual loose-living, of which there is no suggestion in the story of the younger son. It is a splendid example of Luke's delicate, witty and subtle characterisation. Which brother comes out of the story best? Have you ever felt like the elder brother? What picture of God does Jesus present in the Parable of the Prodigal Son?

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 6th March 2016



First Reading: *Passover in the Plains of Jericho*

Joshua 5:9-12

The Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have taken the shame of Egypt away from you." The Israelites pitched their camp at Gilgal and kept the Passover there on the fourteenth day of the month, at evening in the plain of Jericho. On the morrow of the Passover they tasted the produce of that country, unleavened bread and roasted ears of corn, that same day. From that time, from their first eating of the produce of that country, the manna stopped falling. And having manna no longer, the Israelites fed from that year onwards on what the land of Canaan yielded.

In the first readings for the Sundays of Lent, we are working through the history of Israel as we move towards the promise of the New Covenant which is the central point of Easter. In this year's readings, the whole period between the Exodus from Egypt and the promise of the New Covenant at the time of the Babylonian exile (a period of some six hundred years) is represented by this one reading, the moment of arrival in the Promised Land of Canaan. This is the time when the provisional arrangements of the desert wanderings come to an end. The stories of the desert wanderings are folk-history and what happened there has a special meaning for the people; they are not modern research-history. So, manna (probably an edible honey-like excretion of a desert plant) is used in our passage as a symbol - the symbol of God's wonderful protection and feeding of Israel even in harsh and almost uninhabitable conditions (as here in the Sinai desert). The reading describes a double celebration, bringing together two festivals: the Passover in origin is a feast of wandering nomads, as they move at the first full moon of spring from their sheltered winter pastures to cooler summer pastures; the festival of Unleavened Bread, on the other hand, marks the beginning of the wheat harvest, a feast of a settled agricultural people. For Paul the celebration represents the newness of Easter, the freshness of the New Covenant.

Would it help you and your family to make more of religious festivals? How could you do so?

Second Reading: *Reconciled in Christ*

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here. It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on his reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men's faults against them, and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.

As we approach the commemoration of Christ's passion and resurrection our readings focus more on these events. The New Testament uses a variety of images to describe what is happening: Christ was glorified (using the idea of the awesome divine glory spoken about in the Old Testament), he was raised to the right hand of God (using imagery from Psalm 110), he was exalted to heaven. In Christ we have been redeemed like freed slaves, ransomed like hostages, reconciled like estranged friends. In Christ God has reached out to us to bring us back into true and full relationship with him. It is always God who does the reconciling.

In his letter, St Paul calls us "ambassadors of Christ". How can we be more effective "ambassadors"?

“God always does the reconciling.”

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

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