



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 31st July 2016 - The Eighteenth 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 31st July 2016 (Luke 12:13-21): The Dangers of Wealth

A man in the crowd said to Jesus, "Master, tell my brother to give me a share of our inheritance." "My friend," he replied, "who appointed me your judge, or the arbitrator of your claims?" Then he said to them, "Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for a man's life is not made secure by what he owns, even when he has more than he needs." Then he told them a parable: "There was once a rich man who, having had a good harvest from his land, thought to himself, 'What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them, and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?' So it is when a man stores up treasure for himself in place of making himself rich in the sight of God."



3 Reflect

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

Luke's language and style make it clear that he comes from a reasonably privileged background. In his stories he refers to far larger sums of money than Mark does. He also understands about investment banking and rates of interest. This makes it all the more striking that he continually warns against the dangers of wealth. Jesus brushes aside a dispute about inheritance. The parable of the Rich Fool is perhaps the most condemnatory of all the parables; nowhere else in the gospels is anyone called outright a 'Fool'! Luke tells us that salvation came first to the poor, to the shepherds of Bethlehem, through a baby cradled in a cattle-trough. Only Luke says that the apostles left 'everything' to follow Jesus. The guests invited to the Great Supper refuse the invitation because they are distracted by their new purchases. In the ideal young community of the early Church in Jerusalem Luke insists that everything was held in common. The only hope for the rich (for example in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus) is to use their wealth to make friends in heaven.

What challenge does Jesus offer me in this Gospel, particularly about where I find my true 'treasure'?

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 31st July 2016



First Reading: *Vanity of Vanities*

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

Vanity of vanities, the Preacher says. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity! For so it is that a man who has laboured wisely, skilfully and successfully must leave what is his own to someone who has not toiled for it at all. This, too, is vanity and great injustice; for what does he gain for all the toil and strain that he has undergone under the sun? What of all his laborious days, his cares of office, his restless nights? This, too, is vanity.

This is the only Sunday reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes. The Book is attributed to King Solomon (whose dates are traditionally given as c.970-931 BC), but it must have been written several centuries later, even after the time of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC. This late book of wisdom is full of disillusionment and restless questioning of all the old certainties, not even sure about the after-life. It queries whether happiness is anywhere to be found - certainly not in hard work! In this our passage partners the gospel reading about the rich fool, though the rich fool is condemned for his selfish hoarding, while the author of Ecclesiastes despairingly thinks that no toil can win any worthwhile result. Why is this book included in the collection of the revealed truth which is Sacred Scripture? Perhaps because it is always useful to question our certainties, and to make up our minds afresh. Certainly it blows away the assumption made in earlier biblical traditions that happiness is to be found in wealth and distinction, and that wealth is a sign of God's blessing.

Where do you find your security and your happiness?

Second Reading: *Risen with Christ*

Colossians 3:1-5. 9-11

Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ is revealed -and he is your life - you too will be revealed in all your glory with him. That is why you must kill everything in you that belongs only to earthly life: fornication, impurity, guilty passion, evil desires and especially greed, which is the same thing as worshipping a false god; and never tell each other lies. You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator; and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised or the uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free man. There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything.

This final reading from Colossians is full of the hope of the Resurrection (indeed, it is prescribed for reading also on Easter Sunday morning). The Pauline theme of being baptized into Christ and so sharing his risen life is familiar from Paul's earlier letters. Adopted into sonship with Christ, we have cast off all the old ties, and there is no room for all the old vices. But there is a fascinating and inspiring change of viewpoint in this epistle. In the earlier letters Paul said that we were already reconciled to God but not yet saved; our salvation is still to be completed in the future. The later letters to the Colossians and Ephesians state that we have already been raised with Christ, but this risen life in Christ is still hidden in God and merely has yet to be revealed. Once we have been baptized into Christ we have been taken on as his own, and can securely address God with intimacy as 'Father'. This gives us confidence in our continuing struggle to shake off all evil and allow Christ to take control of every aspect of our lives. We still are 'being transformed into Christ', but the battle is already won.

If my natural dwelling-place is now with Christ 'at the right hand of the Father', what difference does this make to the way I lead my life and to my priorities?

“Allow Christ to take control of every aspect of our lives.”

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