



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 26th February 2017 - The Eighth 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 Sunday 26th February 2017 - Trust in God's Care (Matthew 6:24-34)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'No one can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money. That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it. Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing! Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are? Can any of you, for all his worrying, add one single cubit to his span of life? And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these. Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field which is there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you men of little faith? So do not worry; do not say, "What are we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed?" It is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.'

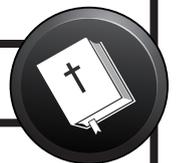
3 Reflect

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

At the beginning of this passage we are told that you cannot serve two masters, a lesson which in the gospel of Luke is illustrated by the parable of the Crafty Steward. Unscrupulously, when he receives notice to quit, he defrauds his master by cutting down the sums owed by his master's debtors, and so wins their friendship which will continue to support him (Luke 16:1-13). In Matthew's Sermon on the Mount this teaching about service (and the subsequent passage which promises God's care for his faithful) comes after the requirement that we should serve God 'in secret', not blazoning our good works before on-lookers. That passage is omitted from the semi-continuous reading of the Sermon because it is used at the beginning of Lent, on Ash Wednesday, so here we go straight on to the promise of a reward for faithful service. It is a commonplace of philosophers that no amount of worrying will increase our safety or comfort, but we need Christian faith to find our satisfaction and security in the divine protection. God's loving, maternal care does not preclude prolonged suffering; this led St Teresa of Avila to exclaim to Jesus, 'If you treat your friends like this, it is no wonder that you have so few of them.'

What is your chief worry? Do you worry too much? What may help to stop you worrying?

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 26th February 2017



First Reading: *A Mother's Love*

Isaiah 49:14-15

Zion was saying, 'The Lord has abandoned me; the Lord has forgotten me.' Does a woman forget her baby at the breast, or fail to cherish the son of her womb? Yet even if these forget, I will never forget you.'

In the Bible God is normally regarded as a father. By analogy with the genetic theory that the father is the one who sparks into action the process of procreation, God is the father of all things. God is also often seen as the disciplinarian, who corrects, forms and, when necessary, punishes his People. In general a mother is seen as a softer, more affectionate and tender figure than a father, someone to whom the child can go running in tearful distress and be sure of finding comfort rather than the deserved sternness of a father. In reality, of course, there is no sex or gender in God, so that God's love does not have gender-characteristics. Sometimes God is represented as a loving and utterly caring parent, whose gender remains indeterminate, as in Hosea 11.1-4. But it is also important that there are passages, as this passage of Isaiah, where God is compared to a mother, whose limitless affection can never be broken, will never turn away or be exhausted. This is a tenderness which in the gospel-stories Jesus shows to those who approach him, to the tax-collectors and the woman who was a sinner, the adulteress.

We often use images to help us to understand God. Which images do you find most helpful?

Second Reading: *The Servant of Christ*

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

People must think of us as Christ's servants, stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God. What is expected of stewards is that each one should be found worthy of his trust. Not that it makes the slightest difference to me whether you, or indeed any human tribunal, find me worthy or not. I will not even pass judgement on myself. True, my conscience does not reproach me at all, but that does not prove that I am acquitted; the Lord alone is my judge. There must be no passing of premature judgement. Leave that until the Lord comes: he will light up all that is hidden in the dark and reveal the secret intentions of men's hearts. Then will be the time for each one to have whatever praise he deserves, from God.

'People must think of us as Christ's servants', begins the reading. Paul thinks of himself as the servant of Christ, just as Jesus thinks of himself as servant, the Servant of the Lord. There is a handful of sayings of Jesus which acquire their full sense only if they are seen as alluding to Isaiah's prophecies about a Servant of the Lord who would draw Israel back to fidelity to the Lord, and would reach his fulfilment only through suffering and humiliation: 'the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45). Paul speaks of himself and his suffering for Christ in the same way, except that, whereas Jesus is the Servant of the Lord God, Paul is the servant of the Lord Jesus. Especially when he writes comparing himself to those who claim to be 'super-apostles', he refutes their claims by protesting that he has suffered more and been more bitterly persecuted on behalf of Christ than they have (2 Corinthians 11:22-12:13). So Paul sees himself as carrying on the saving work of Christ. In the same way, it is through suffering and humiliation that he will be raised up at the last day.

Why must God's servants always suffer?

“ Carrying on the saving work of Christ. ”

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