



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2017 - Ascension Sunday

**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

**From the Gospel of Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2017 - A Final Commission to the Disciples (Matthew 28:16-20)**

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave to you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'



**3** Reflect

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

*This is a momentous climax of the Gospel. Jesus is on the holy mountain. Where is this mountain? We do not know; nor does it matter. The important thing is that Jesus is presented as the glorious Son of Man of the prophecy of Daniel, to whom all authority on earth was given; but now Jesus reveals that he has all authority on earth and in heaven. As Jesus sends his disciples out, he promises that his divine presence will be always with them. It is in the strength of that presence that they will pursue their task. This promise creates a bracket around the Gospel: these final words of Jesus echo the message from the opening of Matthew's Gospel when the angel speaks of the name to be given to Jesus. 'They will call him "Emmanuel", a name which means "God is with us".' The divine presence of God in Jesus and in his community is the clue to the whole Gospel of Matthew. This theme is also stressed in the centre of the Gospel when Jesus says, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'*

**Where do you experience the divine presence of Christ?**

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 28<sup>th</sup> May 2017



## First Reading: *The Ascension*

### Acts 1:1-11

In my earlier work, *Theophilus*, I dealt with everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven. He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God. When he had been at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. 'It is,' he had said, 'what you have heard me speak about: John baptised with water but you, not many days from now, will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.' Now having met together, they asked him, 'Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth.' As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were still staring into the sky when suddenly two men in white were standing near them and they said, 'Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking into the sky? Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, this same Jesus will come back in the same way as you have seen him go there.'

*How are we to envisage what happened at the Ascension? Two feet disappearing into a cloud? The Ascension is mentioned only in the Acts, and the other gospels seem to imply that the Risen Christ was glorified on the day of the Resurrection itself. Luke, the author, is putting across several messages. Firstly, the forty days since Easter should not be carefully counted. In biblical language 'forty' means just 'a fairly long period', often a period of preparation, like Jesus' forty days being tested in the desert, or Israel's forty years in the wilderness after the Exodus. For all that time since Easter Jesus has been preparing his apostles. Secondly, it is the definitive parting with the physical Jesus: it is now the Spirit of Christ which is at the heart of the Church, inspiring all its activity. Thirdly, Luke represents Jesus as a prophet (and more than a prophet), so he leaves his disciples in the same way as the prophet Elijah, who was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot, leaving his disciple Elisha to carry on his work, filled with a double share of his spirit.*

***In what way is the Ascension an encouragement? How would you explain the Ascension to a non-Christian friend?***

## Second Reading: *Christ is Supreme*

### Ephesians 1:17-23

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power that he has exercised for us believers. This you can tell from the strength of his power at work in Christ, when he used it to raise him from the dead and to make him sit at his right hand, in heaven, far above every Sovereignty, Authority, Power, or Domination, or any other name that can be named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come. He has put all things under his feet, and made him, as the ruler of everything, the head of the Church; which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation.

*At the heart of this reading is a blessing, which tells us about the meaning of the Ascension for the Church. It is not the manner of Christ's departure which is important, but the exalted position of Christ, and the power of God which raised Christ from the dead. This same power has called us to be believers, made us rich in the glory of his heritage, and has given us the strength to follow Christ. As Christians we believe that Jesus was divine not only from birth but from the moment of his conception. It was then that the Word of God became flesh. And yet something further happened at the glorification of Christ in his resurrection. Paul says he was 'constituted Son of God in power' at the resurrection. Is this the same as the claim which the high priest declared blasphemous: 'You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven'? In the final scene of the gospel of Matthew Jesus declares, 'All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me', and the Book of Revelation shows the Risen Christ sharing the throne of God.*

***What does it mean to speak about the power of God?***

“The power of God...  
has called us to be believers.”

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

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