



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 8th April 2018 - The Second Sunday of Easter

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 8th April 2018 (John 20:19-31): Jesus in the Upper Room

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, "Peace be with you," and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." After saying this he breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained." Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, "We have seen the Lord," he answered, "Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe." Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. "Peace be with you," he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, "Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe." Thomas replied, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe." There were many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.



3 Reflect

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

Two aspects of this meeting of the disciples with Jesus are especially striking. This is the last scene of the gospel of John, for chapter 21 is an appendix added later. At the end of this gospel, before the concluding reflection, Thomas gives the only direct acclamation in the New Testament of Jesus as God. Nowhere else is Jesus directly hailed as 'God', though there are other ways in which readers come to recognise Jesus as God. So, in a way, this acclamation of the Risen Christ is the climax of the New Testament. Secondly, it is striking that Jesus' final blessing is of peace and forgiveness. The mission of all Christians is to bring peace and forgiveness to a troubled world. Throughout the Bible God is a God of forgiveness. The Old Testament consists of a series of covenants of forgiveness, each in turn broken by God's chosen people: the covenant with Noah after the Flood, the covenant with Abraham, the covenant with Moses after the worship of the Golden Calf, finally the new covenant promised by Jeremiah when unfaithful Israel is exiled to Babylon. Christianity is not for the perfect but for sinners. Forgiven sinners must bring forgiveness to all those around them.

How can you bring Jesus' blessing of peace and forgiveness to the world around you?

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 8th April 2018



First Reading: *Christian Sharing*

Acts 4:32-35

The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common. The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all given great respect. None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from them, to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

On the six Sundays of Eastertide we hear the story of the earliest Christian community. Each Eastertide the Church puts these readings forward as a model for us, emphasising important aspects of that early Christian life. This Sunday's first reading stresses the unity of the community and the mutual caring among members of the community to ensure that no one is in want. This care of those in need, and particularly in financial matters, remains a strong challenge to us today. Care for the needy receives strong emphasis throughout the Bible, from the earliest part of the Law Codes of Israel right up to the Letter of James and beyond. The Bible teaches us that, as man and woman are made in the image of God, so we are to care for one another and for those in need as God cares for us; this is part of the human obligation to foster life and to care for creation. The gospel of Luke especially stresses the dangers of wealth and the need to use wealth responsibly and generously. In the Acts of the Apostles (the continuation of Luke's gospel) this care for others is part of what it means to be 'united, heart and soul'. Another feature of this earliest description of Christian life together is the bold proclamation of the Resurrection of the Lord.

How may you rise to the challenge of the early Christian community, to be "united, heart and soul" with the rest of the community, and to care for those most in need?

Second Reading: *Begotten by God*

1 John 5:1-6

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and whoever loves the Father that begot him loves the child whom he begets. We can be sure that we love God's children if we love God himself and do what he has commanded us; this is what loving God is - keeping his commandments; and his commandments are not difficult, because anyone who has been begotten by God has already overcome the world; this is the victory over the world - our faith. Who can overcome the world? Only the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God; Jesus Christ who came by water and blood, not with water only, but with water and blood; with the Spirit as another witness - since the Spirit is the truth.

The second readings for the Sundays of Eastertide this year are all from the first letter of John. The main topic is Christian love. It is quite significant that this Sunday's passage occurs towards the end of the letter and so is read out of order to underline the importance of its message for the Church. It centres on two overarching aspects of Christian love, which are vital for any genuine manifestation of that love. The first aspect is that this love, which conquers the world, is built on faith in Jesus as Son of God. 'The world' here stands for all the evil and godless attitudes standing in opposition to Christian values. By raising Jesus from the dead God has shown the vanity of these attitudes, and has made the victory of Christian love over them sure. These are the true values which in the end will prevail. The second aspect is that by Christian love we are raised to be sons of God, co-heirs with Christ and able to cry 'Abba, Father' truly to God. To the Hebrew mind to be a 'son of' is wider than mere physical generation. It involves respect, devotion, obedience, keeping an eye fixed on the other, and careful conformity in desire, ability and behaviour. It is much like being 'in the image of', but closer, stronger, more heartfelt and more intimate.

Take time to reflect on this Hebrew idea of 'son of'. How may you grow more fully as a child of God?

“ Love which conquers the world is built on faith in Jesus as Son of God. ”

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

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