



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2018 - Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

**1** Relax & Remember

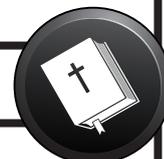
Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this 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 17<sup>th</sup> June 2018 (Mark 4:26-34): The Seed Growing**

Jesus said to the crowds: "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man throws seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the crop is ready, he loses no time: he starts to reap because the harvest has come." He also said, "What can we say the kingdom of God is like? What parable can we find for it? It is like a mustard seed which at the time of its sowing in the soil is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet once it is sown it grows into the biggest shrub of them all and puts out big branches so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade." Using many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, so far as they were capable of understanding it. He would not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything to his disciples when they were alone.



**3** Reflect

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

*Jesus was a countryman, from the rich agricultural plains of Galilee, where wheat and fruit-trees abounded. It was natural for him to use such imagery to describe the Kingship of God which he was proclaiming. Today's gospel reading offers us two of the many images in Mark's chapter of parables. What did Jesus want to teach by them? Images can carry many layers of meaning. First, the seed growing secretly all the time: perhaps Jesus meant that God's purposes are accomplished in spite of our feeble and fumbling efforts; perhaps it was a warning that after long waiting the time for decision, the time of harvest had come with Jesus' own mission. Second, the mustard-seed: was this a reply to the discouraged disciples – or perhaps Jesus' critical opponents – that his motley little group of undistinguished peasants, fishermen and tax-collectors would grow into God's own mighty tree? Perhaps this is a first hint that Jesus' mission is for all nations, not just for Israel. All nations would come, nest and find a home in the branches of his mission, just as in the first reading they nest in the branches of the great cedar tree. At any rate, both images show that God is in charge, and has great plans which will be fulfilled despite our own inadequacies.*

**What does Jesus mean to teach by these parables? More specifically, what does Jesus mean by comparing the Christian mission to a tree?**

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 17<sup>th</sup> June 2018



## First Reading: *The Noble Cedar*

### **Ezekiel 17:22-24**

The Lord says this: "From the top of the cedar, from the highest branch I will take a shoot and plant it myself on a very high mountain. I will plant it on the high mountain of Israel. It will sprout branches and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar. Every kind of bird will live beneath it, every winged creature rest in the shade of its branches. And every tree of the field will learn that I, the Lord, am the one who stunts tall trees and makes the low ones grow, who withers green trees and makes the withered green. I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will do it."

*The task of the prophet Ezekiel was to keep up the spirits of the Jews exiled to Babylon. For them it seemed that the sack of Jerusalem was the end of all hope: they had lost their homes, their king, their Temple and even their covenant with God. Ezekiel was a person of fantastic imagination, not afraid to indulge in wild and daring mimes to force through his message that God was still in charge and still caring for Israel. He mimed the siege of Jerusalem by building a mud-brick model and escaping through the wall. His visions are also extraordinary and inspiring. Perhaps the best-known is the Valley of the Dead Bones, prophesying that Israel will come to life again. The passage we read today is an imaginative allegory about a great cedar tree despoiled by two eagles, that is, Israel despoiled by Babylon and Egypt. In our reading God promises that Israel will again become a great cedar tree, in whose shade the nations will come to take shelter. The Gospel parable uses the same figure of a great tree in which all peoples will shelter. The great cedars on the mountains of Lebanon are an awesome and unforgettable sight, stretching far into the sky and wide across the hills, a suitable refuge for great birds and so for all peoples.*

**What does it mean to think of the Church as a great cedar, a refuge in which we may shelter?**

## Second Reading: *At Home with the Lord*

### **2 Corinthians 5:6-10**

We are always full of confidence when we remember that to live in the body means to be exiled from the Lord, going as we do by faith and not by sight - we are full of confidence, I say, and actually want to be exiled from the body and make our home with the Lord. Whether we are living in the body or exiled from it, we are intent on pleasing him. For all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ, and each of us will get what he deserves for the things he did in the body, good or bad.

“To be with the Lord is our natural family home.”

*Paul uses several different sets of imagery to convey the goal of the Christian life for which he is longing. We know that all imagery is inadequate, but especially such pictures as heaven 'up there', in the clouds, where we all play on harps. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul used images of participating in God's power, incorruptibility and glory, of being transformed into a new mode of being by the Spirit. In today's reading Paul speaks of 'being at home' with the Lord in contrast to being in exile. Now that we are adopted children of God, to be with the Lord is our natural family home. In the final sentence he envisages also the final judgment when we are laid bare and exposed for what we truly are, the frightening but comforting moment when we see ourselves as God sees us, when we can cease putting on an act and keeping up appearances. Before God there is neither need nor possibility of pretence. All masks are stripped off. This too is an aspect of being at home, for there is no pretending before the family.*

**How do you envisage 'heaven'?**

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