



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 23rd September 2018 - The Twenty Fifth 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 23rd September 2018 (Mark 9:30-37): The Second Prophecy of the Passion

After leaving the mountain Jesus and his disciples made their way through Galilee; and he did not want anyone to know, because he was instructing his disciples; he was telling them, "The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men; they will put him to death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again." But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him. They came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" They said nothing because they had been arguing which of them was the greatest. So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all." He then took a little child, set him in front of them, put his arms round him, and said to them, "Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."



3 Reflect

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

Mark gives us three formal prophecies of the Passion, of which this is the second. He uses the triple number frequently to stress the importance and sureness of an event. So Peter denies Jesus three times, and Pilate three times asserts Jesus' innocence. Jesus is shown to be fully aware of the fate that awaits him: he goes into it with his eyes open, and accepts his Father's will; he is, moreover, aware that his Father will not desert him, but will vindicate him by the Resurrection. Again the disciples fail to understand the message: while Jesus had been giving them the message of triumph only through suffering and humiliation, they had been thinking about who would be the greatest. So Jesus sets before them a child as the model. In what way is a child a model? Like adults, children can be selfish and they can be devious and scheming from an early age. However, children are probably more aware than adults that they cannot totally control a situation and trustingly accept that they are dependent on others. The final words that Jesus speaks in today's Gospel suggests that it is this quality of dependence that Jesus proposes: like little children we should be dependent on the will of the Father.

Why does Jesus put forward a child as a role model for us?

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 23rd September 2018



First Reading: *The Good Man Taunted*

The Book of Wisdom 2:12.17-20

The godless say to themselves, "Let us lie in wait for the virtuous man, since he annoys us and opposes our way of life, reproaches us for our breaches of the law and accuses us of playing false to our upbringing. Let us see if what he says is true; let us observe what kind of end he himself will have. If the virtuous man is God's son, God will take his part and rescue him from the clutches of his enemies. Let us test him with cruelty and with torture, and thus explore this gentleness of his and put his endurance to the proof. Let us condemn him to a shameful death since he will be looked after - we have his word for it."

This is one of the few readings we hear on Sundays taken from the Book of Wisdom. This book was written probably at Alexandria, and was written in Greek, so is not included in the Protestant canon of scripture, which includes only the books written in Hebrew. A major theme of the book is the contrast between divine Wisdom and folly. It also includes a wonderful poem to God's Wisdom, by which he created the world, 'the reflection of the eternal light, and the image of his goodness'. In today's reading we are presented with the taunts which those who refuse divine Wisdom make against those who embrace Wisdom. It is remarkable that in Matthew's gospel the taunts of the chief priests, scribes and elders against Jesus as he hangs on the cross use these very same words. This use of scripture is typical of Matthew's irony, and shows just how wrong those taunting Jesus were. The reading, therefore, both prepares us for the prophecy of the passion in the first part of today's gospel reading, and contrasts the boasts of the godless with the wisdom of simplicity represented by the child in the second part of the gospel.

What do we mean when we describe someone as "virtuous"?

Second Reading: *Peace and Prayer*

James 3:16 - 4:3

Wherever you find jealousy and ambition, you find disharmony, and wicked things of every kind being done; whereas the wisdom that comes down from above is essentially something pure; it also makes for peace, and is kindly and considerate; it is full of compassion and shows itself by doing good; nor is there any trace of partiality or hypocrisy in it. Peacemakers, when they work for peace, sow the seeds which will bear fruit in holiness. Where do these wars and battles between yourselves first start? Isn't it precisely in the desires fighting inside your own selves? You want something and you haven't got it; so you are prepared to kill. You have an ambition that you cannot satisfy; so you fight to get your way by force. Why you don't have what you want is because you don't pray for it; when you do pray and don't get it, it is because you have not prayed properly; you have prayed for something to indulge your own desires.

The reading from the Letter of James begins by contrasting quarrelling and ambition, and their evil effects, with the true wisdom which brings peace. Then it goes on to some stern words about prayer which is not answered, 'because you have prayed for something to indulge your own desires'. Is it wrong, then, to ask God for what we want? What about 'Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find'? The problem of unanswered prayers of petition is a difficult one. We do not really believe that we can change God's mind and intentions by praying. Nevertheless, we express to God our needs and desires, although we are well aware that he knows them already. This is what a child does to a loving father, 'Please, please!' We even link arms with our mother, Mary, or even our brother and Saviour, Jesus, to increase the persuasive power. But every prayer of petition, just as a child's prayer to a loving father, contains the hidden text that the Father knows best. The child or the praying Christian can want something desperately, but, for true prayer, the child or Christian submits in obedience to the Father; only in this way is our prayer an expression of trust and affection.

What is the point of petitionary prayer (prayers of request)?

“True prayer submits in obedience to the Father.”

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