

W THE WEDNESDAY WORD

The Parish Version

Encountering Christ
Prayerfully preparing for the
Sunday Mass and praying in
particular for our school families



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 15th September 2019 - The Twenty Fourth 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 15th September 2019 (Luke 15:1-32): Forgiveness

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. "This man," they said, "welcomes sinners and eats with them." So he spoke this parable to them: "What man among you with a hundred sheep, losing one, would not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the missing one till he found it? And when he found it, would he not joyfully take it on his shoulders and then, when he got home, call together his friends and neighbours? 'Rejoice with me,' he would say, 'I have found my sheep that was lost.' In the same way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need of repentance. Or again, what woman with ten drachmas would not, if she lost one, light a lamp and sweep out the house and search thoroughly till she found it? And then, when she had found it, call together her friends and neighbours? 'Rejoice with me,' she would say, 'I have found the drachma I lost.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner." Jesus also said: "A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery. When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine. So he left the place and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. And they began to celebrate. Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. 'Your brother has come,' replied the servant, 'and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound.' He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, 'Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property - he and his women - you kill the calf we had been fattening.' The father said, 'My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it is only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.'"

3 Reflect

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

In today's Gospel St Luke recounts three particularly attractive stories about forgiveness. The first two form a typical Lukan pair. First he tells the story of the lost sheep, which also occurs in St Matthew's Gospel account. Luke, however, places the accent on the joy in heaven at the return of the sinner. Then, to the story of the man looking for his sheep, Luke adds the story of a woman looking for her lost coin. He is always careful to show that women have an equal part in the Kingdom with men. So he deliberately pairs Zechariah and Mary, Simeon and Anna, Jairus' daughter raised to life with the Widow of Naim's son, and so on. The main story today, however, is the Prodigal Son, told with all Luke's love, artistry and delicacy of character-study. In the full version of this Gospel, we hear of the wastrel son who goes back home simply because he is hungry; of the loving father perpetually on the look-out, running to meet the son, interrupting the carefully-prepared speech and pampering the returned young dissolute; of the disgruntled stay-at-home who invents slanders about the other's 'loose women' and is gently corrected by his father's reminder that he is 'your brother'. Jesus presents us with an unforgettable picture of the overflowing love and forgiveness of God. Is there anyone you have not yet forgiven? Sometimes it is not easy.

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 15th September 2019



First Reading: *Israel Rebels in the Desert*

Exodus 32:7-11.13-14

The Lord spoke to Moses, "Go down now, because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have apostasised. They have been quick to leave the way I marked out for them; they have made themselves a calf of molten metal and have worshipped it and offered it sacrifice. 'Here is your God, Israel,' they have cried, 'who brought you up from the land of Egypt!' I can see how headstrong these people are! Leave me, now; my wrath shall blaze out against them and devour them; of you, however, I will make a great nation." But Moses pleaded with the Lord his God. "Lord," he said, "why should your wrath blaze out against this people of yours whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with arm outstretched and mighty hand? Remember Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, your servants to whom by your own self you swore and made this promise: I will make your offspring as many as the stars of heaven, and all this land which I promised I will give to your descendants, and it shall be their heritage for ever." So the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

We start off with a fine argument between the Lord and Moses. 'Your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt', say the Lord to Moses. 'Your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt', say Moses to the Lord. Like parents, each blames the other for a misbehaving child. As soon as Moses' back was turned, Israel made itself an idol in the form of a golden calf – or rather a golden bull, called a 'calf' merely to be derisory – after the model of the local storm-gods. The principal point is that, for all his blazing anger, the Lord cannot maintain his wrath against the people to whom he has promised an eternal inheritance. Once again, God changes his mind. His love of his people triumphs over his anger. In the next chapter of Exodus he passes before Moses and cries out the meaning of the name 'the Lord': a God of mercy and forgiveness, slow to anger, rich in faithful love and constancy - a meaning of the name which will echo throughout the pages of the Scriptures. This first reading prepares us for the story of the Prodigal Son in the Gospel.

Is God always ready to forgive? Can anything stop his forgiveness?

Second Reading: *Paul the Sinner*

1 Timothy 1:12-17

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, and who judged me faithful enough to call me into his service even though I used to be a blasphemer and did all I could to injure and discredit the faith. Mercy, however, was shown me, because until I became a believer I had been acting in ignorance; and the grace of our Lord filled me with faith and with the love that is in Christ Jesus. Here is a saying that you can rely on and nobody should doubt: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I myself am the greatest of them; and if mercy has been shown to me, it is because Jesus Christ meant to make me the greatest evidence of his inexhaustible patience for all the other people who would later have to trust in him to come to eternal life. To the eternal King, the undying, invisible and only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen

We read the two letters to Timothy over the next seven Sundays. Many scholars hold that, in accordance with a contemporary convention, the letters to Timothy and Titus were not actually written by Paul, but by a faithful disciple, still inspired by Paul, who puts what Paul would have said in the particular circumstances the letters have to deal with. Paul is represented as giving directions to his two principal co-operators in their organisation of Church structures. These letters present a valuable picture of the problems of the Church, a generation or two after Paul, as (towards the end of the first century AD) they were settling into an organisational pattern, and discerning how to live out their beliefs in the context of a Hellenistic society into which they were born and which had its own value system. In the present reading Paul's open confession of his ferocious way of life before his conversion to Christianity, and the mercy he received from the Lord, pairs well with the record of divine mercy in the other two readings. The final little confession of faith in Christ as Saviour is one of the many declarations of Christological teaching which we find in these letters and which enrich our understanding of the faith. Such traditional formulations of doctrine are especially valued guidelines for our knowledge of Christ and the Church.

Reflect on an occasion when the grace and mercy of God drew you back from disaster.

“ He received mercy
from the Lord. ”

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