



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 11th March 2018 - The Fourth Sunday of Lent

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 Sunday 11th March 2018 (John 3:14-21): Nicodemus

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "The Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be condemned; but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already, because he has refused to believe in the name of God's only Son. On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light has come into the world men have shown they prefer darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed; but the man who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God".



3 Reflect

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

After Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus comes this reflection on Nicodemus' visit. Is it Jesus' reflection or the evangelist's? The text does not make it clear. Throughout the gospel of John people are coming to Jesus and judging themselves by their reactions to Jesus. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son. In his turn the Son does not judge, but we judge ourselves by our reaction to him. So at the wedding at Cana the disciples believe in him and see his glory. In the Temple the Jews refuse belief and are condemned. Then comes Nicodemus in secret and in fear. At this point he is sitting on the fence, afraid of the Pharisees - but by the time of the burial he has decided for Jesus. After Nicodemus the Samaritan woman approaches Jesus: cheeky and unbelieving at first, she is won over by Jesus' playful persistence. And so on: the Jews on one side, the man healed at the Pool of Bethzatha on the other; the Jews on one side, the man blind from birth on the other. The decision is ours too.

When confronted by Jesus do we come to the light so that our deeds may be known, or do we shun the light?

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 11th March 2018



First Reading: *The Broken Covenant*

2 Chronicles 36:14-16. 19-23

All the heads of the priesthood, and the people too, added infidelity to infidelity, copying all the shameful practices of the nations and defiling the Temple that the Lord had consecrated for himself in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their ancestors, tirelessly sent them messenger after messenger, since he wished to spare his people and his house. But they ridiculed the messengers of God, they despised his words, they laughed at his prophets, until at last the wrath of the Lord rose so high against his people that there was no further remedy. Their enemies burned down the Temple of God, demolished the walls of Jerusalem, set fire to all its palaces, and destroyed everything of value in it. The survivors were deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon; they were to serve him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. This is how the word of the Lord was fulfilled that he spoke through Jeremiah, "Until this land has enjoyed its sabbath rest, until seventy years have gone by, it will keep sabbath throughout the days of its desolation." And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to fulfil the word of the Lord that was spoken through Jeremiah, the Lord roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to issue a proclamation and to have it publicly displayed throughout his kingdom: 'Thus speaks Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; he has ordered me to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God be with him! Let him go up.'

In the first readings for Sundays in Lent we have worked through the promising but tragic history of Israel. It is a history of promises by God, of broken promises and fresh starts by Israel. We have seen this in the stories of the covenant with Noah, of Abraham's obedient trust, and of the commands given to Moses to keep Israel faithful to the Lord. Now we come to the story of great disaster, inevitably brought on by Israel's repeated failure and infidelity. There is an underlying theme to this history of Israel: fidelity brings prosperity and healing punishment is the inevitable consequence of desertion of the Lord. In this final chapter of Chronicles the historian looks back at the ultimate catastrophe of Exile in Babylon, and the return of a renewed Israel to the Holy City. Even then the promised blessing of God would seem long delayed. God's people were an oppressed little community, huddled round Jerusalem, harassed by their neighbours and dominated by one foreign power after another. After some years they did summon up energy and resources to rebuild the Temple, but they continued to yearn for the decisive intervention of God which would enable them to serve their Lord in freedom and total dedication.

Do you always show fidelity to the Lord?

Second Reading: *The Grace of God*

Ephesians 2:4-10

God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy: when we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ - it is through grace that you have been saved - and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus. This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.

The Letter to the Ephesians is usually considered to be an early commentary on Paul rather than from the Apostle's own hand. The Letter reflects on the salvation won by Christ. After the record in the first reading of the repeated failures of Israel, the message (twice repeated) that salvation is by grace alone, is particularly apt. Grace here means not a substance poured into our souls to provide some sort of salvific energy, but is the unmerited favour and choice by God. It is a personal relationship rather than something material. God has smiled on each of us and invited us into his friendship. In the light of this gift of friendship we are strengthened and encouraged to serve him, so that this gift of his friendship becomes an ever stronger and more important element in our lives. God shows us his love and we respond. He shows us even greater love: the greatest gift of all is his Son and his salvation, the new life won for us by Christ.

How do you respond to this abounding love of God?

“God has smiled on each of us and invited us into his friendship.”

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