



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 16th December 2018 - The Third Sunday of Advent

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 16th December 2018 (Luke 3:10-18): John the Baptist's Counsels

When all the people asked John, "What must we do?" he answered, "If anyone has two tunics, he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same." There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said to him, "Master what must we do?" He said to them, "Exact no more than your rate." Some soldiers asked him in their turn, "What about us? What must we do?" He said to them, "No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!" A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, "I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out." As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

3 Reflect

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

In this second of the two Advent Sunday gospels about John the Baptist we first hear details about how to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. Luke is always aware of the dangers of wealth and money, so he concentrates on avoiding its misuse. First he teaches equal sharing with the needy, no hoarding but generosity. Then he turns to financial exploitation. Tax-collectors had to pay for the right to collect taxes, and would be tempted to extort a nice margin to cover their own needs. In the same way soldiers could be tempted to abuse their power by bullying those they were meant to protect. The second half of John's task is to point away from himself towards Jesus, who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Luke's gospel and the Acts of the Apostles are full of the Holy Spirit. Luke must have been vividly aware of the working of the Spirit in the Church, in its ministers of all kinds and in the life of the Christian communities. He warns also of the fierce fire which will purge away impurities; for John the Baptist the Messiah is a stern figure who will burn away the rubbish in human hearts to make room for the Spirit.

What is the "rubbish" in my life which needs to be burnt away to prepare for the coming of Jesus?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB



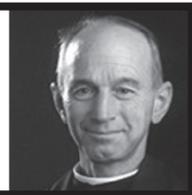
4 Respond & Request

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 16th December 2018



First Reading: *Rejoice, Daughter of Jerusalem!*

Zephaniah 3:14-18

Shout for joy, daughter of Zion; Israel, shout aloud! Rejoice, exult with all your heart, daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has repealed your sentence; he has driven your enemies away. The Lord, the king of Israel, is in your midst; you have no more evil to fear. When that day comes, word will come to Jerusalem: Zion, have no fear; do not let your hands fall limp. The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult with joy over you; he will renew you by his love; he will dance with shouts of joy for you as on a day of festival.

Zephaniah prophesies that Jerusalem, the Holy City, sacked by the Babylonians, will be restored. That day will be a day of overwhelming joy, when the Lord will truly be king in Jerusalem. After the exile in Babylon the Jews returned to Jerusalem, but they were continually dominated by one set of foreign rulers after another, tossed from one to the next as the plaything of their powerful neighbours. They longed more and more to be free, to have God as their only ruler. When Jesus came, the kingship of God dominated his whole horizon, but the people failed to recognize the kingship of God in his proclamation and his way of life. He was not the conquering hero they expected, and the citizens he gathered into his kingdom were the hungry, the poor, the persecuted, the disadvantaged, the alienated, the lost, the despised, the crippled and the sick. It was to these that he brought joy and rejoicing 'as on a day of festival'. If people failed to see God at work in Jesus' life, it was because they were looking for the wrong sort of God. If we want to share Christ's joy at Christmas, we must focus on the right kind of kingship of God.

How may I joyfully prepare for the coming of the Lord?

Second Reading: *Be joyful in the Lord!*

Philippians 4:4-7

I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness. Let your tolerance be evident to everyone: the Lord is very near. There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.

This third Sunday of Advent, halfway through the preparation for Christmas, is traditionally known as Gaudete ('Rejoice') Sunday. The encouragement which begins our reading from Philippians ('Be joyful!') underlines this message. However, it is all very well for Paul to tell us not to worry, to be happy and to place all our desires before God. Easier said than done! Moreover, how can we be sure that all our prayers and petitions made to God will be answered? How can they be, if you pray for rain while I pray for sunshine? The true prayer of petition is Jesus' own prayer, an embrace of the Father in loving confidence that God is just that, our loving Father. We can think we know what will make us happy, but the only true recipe for happiness is to leave it to God, in the knowledge that our human perception is limited and incomplete. Any further prayer must be provisional. It is almost a game: I think I know what will make me happy, but on another level I know that I don't know – but I trust that the Lord knows what will bring me true happiness. So, in prayer, I place my worries before the Lord and leave the rest to him.

Should I pray for any specific thing, or leave it all to God?

“Place your worries before the Lord and leave the rest to him.”

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