



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023 - The Twenty Second 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 Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023 - The Cross of Jesus (Matthew 16:21-27)**

Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. 'Heaven preserve you, Lord,' he said. 'This must not happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's.' Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour.'

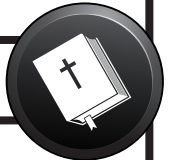
**3** Reflect

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

*What a turn-around! Last Sunday Peter was being congratulated on at last realising the Jesus was the Christ. He was promised the keys and authority to make decisions valid in heaven. Now Jesus shoos him away and tells him that he is Satan, the Tempter. Why the change? Jesus had told Peter that his role as Christ Messiah was to suffer and die in order to achieve his purpose, and Peter shied away from it. What is that particular soft option which you find it so easy to take? What is the difficult task Christ is asking of you, and you are avoiding? We are no better than his first disciples! It happens twice more in the gospel that Jesus foretells his passion and each time the disciples simply fail to understand. Each time Jesus puts it bluntly that you cannot be a Christian without following Jesus in carrying a Cross. We see people suffering the whole time, physical disabilities, breakdown of relationships, heartless treatment from others, financial worries – and then we grouse at a twinge of pain or a hurtful word. Carry the Cross behind Jesus? Yes, of course I will, but if you don't mind, I'll just take that section which is well padded and fits my shoulder nicely. No point in unnecessary splinters in my neck!*

**What is the heaviest Cross in your life? How can you share it with 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 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023



## First Reading: *Jeremiah Complains to God*

### Jeremiah 20:7-9

You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced; you have overpowered me: you were the stronger. I am a daily laughing-stock, everybody's butt. Each time I speak the word, I have to howl and proclaim: 'Violence and ruin!' The word of the Lord has meant for me insult, derision, all day long. I used to say, 'I will not think about him, I will not speak in his name any more.' Then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. The effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not bear it.

*As we saw some weeks ago (in the first reading of the 12th Sunday of the Year), Jeremiah had a tough time, telling the citizens of Jerusalem that their city was to be besieged and destroyed, and that they themselves were to be dragged into exile. He tried to evade his duty of announcing this dire message, but the Lord gave him no peace, no matter how much he attempted to drive the message from his mind. So God overpowers or 'seduces' the prophet and compels him to proclaim the message. Jeremiah almost has a sort of love-hate relationship with the Lord. In the same way, Paul says he has no choice but to proclaim the message of Christ. In the gospel reading Peter suggests to Jesus that he should avoid the way of suffering, and Jesus refuses to take any escape-route. In all these cases the natural human tendency to take the easier path crashes headlong into the brick wall of God's will. We are always slow to accept the way of suffering. In the gospel, each time Jesus teaches that he can achieve his glory only through suffering, the disciples seem to refuse to listen.*

**Reflection:** 'Lord, if that is how you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few of them' (St Teresa of Avila).

## Second Reading: *The People of God*

### Romans 12:1-2

Think of God's mercy, my brothers, and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God. Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.

*Paul has concluded his account of the saving work of Christ and its consequences for Israel. Now he goes on to detail some of its implications for the Christian life. The overall banner-headline is that Christian behaviour must be totally different from that of the world, for the Christian is a new creation with a new set of values. Two aspects are most striking in this introductory passage, first the novelty, second the motivation. In chapter 8 on the Spirit, Paul repeatedly stresses that not only Christians, but the whole of creation is straining to be set free from slavery to corruption. The presence of the Spirit of Christ makes all things new; it is a totally new world. In today's passage again he stresses the renewing of our minds. Secondly, Paul emphasises that the motivation comes from within; it is a matter no longer of the external compulsion of the Law, but of inner compulsion, for the Christian has become a living sacrifice, dedicated to God with mind transformed, discerning personally the will of God and acting upon this discernment. This is Christian personal responsibility; we must 'discern for ourselves what is the will of God'.*

**How do I set about 'discerning what is the will of God'?**

“Christian behaviour must be totally different from that of the world.”

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