



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 4th March 2012 - The Second 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 4th March 2012 (Mark 9:2-10): The Transfiguration

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his clothes became dazzlingly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them. Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. "Rabbi," he said, "it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and there came a voice from the cloud, "This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him." Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them any more but only Jesus. As they came down the mountain he warned them to tell no one what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They observed the warning faithfully, though among themselves they discussed what 'rising from the dead' could mean.

3 Reflect

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

As the time of the Passion approaches, the foreboding of the disciples grows. Jesus sustains them with this vivid manifestation of himself in glory. On the holy mountain of revelation they see him transformed. It was a real visual experience, though described in symbols familiar from the Bible - brilliant white clothes, and so on. Moses and Elijah are seen there because they also had experienced the vision of God on the holy mountain: Moses when he had received the Law from God on Mount Sinai; Elijah when he encountered God in the cave on Mount Horeb. The disciples were frightened, confused and overcome at the awesome experience, and yet, at the same time, comforted in such a way which made Peter want to prolong it. Their reaction to the presence of the Lord will later be reflected by that of Christian mystics - both a reassuring terror and a frightening homeliness, the awareness of a presence which is awesome yet comforting - an experience which cannot fully be put into words. The Voice from Heaven is an echo of the Voice heard at Jesus' Baptism. There, however, the Voice was addressed to Jesus, whereas here it is spoken to the disciples, proclaiming Jesus as authorized teacher, the one who speaks with the authority of the Beloved Son.

When and how do you meet Jesus? How do you respond to God? Are you frightened of God, or is God a comfort to you?

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 4th March 2012



First Reading: *The Sacrifice of Isaac*

Genesis 22:1-2. 9-13. 15-18

God put Abraham to the test. "Abraham, Abraham," he called. "Here I am," he replied. "Take your son," God said, "your only child Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him as a burnt offering, on a mountain I will point out to you." When they arrived at the place God had pointed out to him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood. Then he stretched out his hand and seized the knife to kill his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven. "Abraham, Abraham," he said. "I am here," he replied. "Do not raise your hand against the boy," the angel said. "Do not harm him, for now I know you fear God. You have not refused me your son, your only son." Then looking up, Abraham saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. Abraham took the ram and offered it as a burnt-offering in place of his son. The angel of the Lord called Abraham a second time from heaven. "I swear by my own self - it is the Lord who speaks - because you have done this, because you have not refused me your son, your only son, I will shower blessings on you; I will make your descendants as many as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore. Your descendants shall gain possession of the gates of their enemies. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, as a reward for your obedience."

Every parent must be moved by this terrible and touching story. How could a parent do such a thing? And the boy was Abraham's last hope for the survival of his family, granted to him to fulfil God's promise. The narrative pace slows down as they approach the point of sacrifice. In the full version of the story in Genesis we read how Isaac is allowed to carry the wood, but Abraham carefully carries anything on which the child might hurt himself, the fire and the knife. One can imagine the jaunty boy trotting along beside dad, bouncing questions at him, and dad's monosyllabic answers as he nears the moment he dreads. Yet Abraham trusted in God right up to the brink of disaster, somehow confident that God would rescue him from this terrible deed. As Paul stresses, it was not anything Abraham did that justified him, not his obedient action, but his total trust in God. The tradition of the Church sees in this tragic story a 'prequel' of God's offering his only, beloved Son for the salvation of the human race; it is a mysterious preparation for that supreme offering which we celebrate at Easter. With this interpretation of the text we keep the goal before our eyes, as we advance along the way during the season of Lent.

Do I have such total trust in God's love?

Second Reading: *Paul rejoices in God's love*

Romans 8:31-34

With God on our side who can be against us? Since God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up to benefit us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that he will not refuse anything he can give. Could anyone accuse those that God has chosen? When God acquits, could anyone condemn? Could Christ Jesus? No! He not only died for us - he rose from the dead, and there at God's right hand he stands and pleads for us.

“The Cross is the supreme act of love: Jesus loves his Father even to death.”

Paul reflects on God's love: if God loved us sufficiently to deliver up his son for us, there is no limit to his love. Paul begins his letter to the Romans by exposing the human race as mired in sin. The disobedience of Adam (and 'Adam' means 'man' in Hebrew) is the symbol of this sin. But Paul shows that the perfect, loving obedience of Christ (the Second Adam) to his Father unravels our disobedience, and sets us right again in God's love. The Cross is the supreme act of love: Jesus loves his Father even to death. God accepts this death out of love for the human race. Nothing, continues Paul, can separate us from this love, neither life nor death nor human nor superhuman powers. As an example of this love, Paul then shows how even the Jews who rejected Jesus remain God's beloved people. In the end they too will be saved by that love.

God in Christ has shown us how to love. How do we truly follow this great example of love the Lord has given us?

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