



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



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 23rd January 2022 - The Third 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 23rd January 2022 - Jesus Proclaims his Message (Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21)

Seeing that many others have undertaken to draw up accounts of the events that have taken place among us, exactly as these were handed down to us by those who from the outset were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, I in my turn, after carefully going over the whole story from the beginning, have decided to write an ordered account for you, Theophilus, so that your Excellency may learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received. Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee; and his reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone praised him. He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found a place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen."



3 Reflect

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

Today's gospel passage starts the series of readings from Luke which will continue throughout the ordinary Sundays of the Year. It is composed of two separate passages: first it gives Luke's introduction to his gospel, in which he explains how and why he wrote it. Then, jumping over the preparatory stories of Jesus' infancy, baptism and testing in the desert, it comes directly to his programmatic manifesto in the synagogue at Nazareth. The gospel is offered to Theophilus – a Greek name – and is written for gentile communities. So Luke stresses that Jesus' message is not just for Jews but for the peoples of the whole world. Twice in the second passage (Jesus' manifesto in Nazareth) Luke stresses that Jesus is moved by the Spirit of the Lord. As we see in the second reading, the Spirit was obviously at work in the early Christian communities. This was no more than a continuation of the Spirit's activity from the very beginning of the Christian movement. In Luke's stories of the annunciation, birth and infancy of Jesus the presence of the Spirit is constantly noted. In the earliest stories of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles the same guidance by the Spirit directs every move.

Why did Jesus choose to read this passage from the scriptures?

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.**



The Wednesday Word is under the patronage of St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church
Within the tradition of the Catholic Church, each Wednesday is dedicated to St Joseph

WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS +

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 23rd January 2022



First Reading: *Ezra Reads from the Law*

Nehemiah 8:2-6. 8-10

Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, consisting of men, women, and children old enough to understand. This was the first day of the seventh month. On the square before the Water Gate, in the presence of the men and women, and children old enough to understand, he read from the book from early morning till noon; all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden dais erected for the purpose. In full view of all the people - since he stood higher than all the people - Ezra opened the book; and when he opened it all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people raised their hands and answered, "Amen! Amen!"; then they bowed down and, face to the ground, prostrated themselves before the Lord. And Ezra read from the Law of God, translating and giving the sense, so that the people understood what was read. Then Nehemiah - His Excellency - and Ezra, priest and scribe (and the Levites who were instructing the people) said to all the people, "This day is sacred to the Lord your God. Do not be mournful; do not weep." For the people were all in tears as they listened to the words of the Law. He then said, "Go, eat the fat, drink the sweet wine, and send a portion to the man who has nothing prepared ready. For this day is sacred to our Lord. Do not be sad: the joy of the Lord is your stronghold."

The Book of Nehemiah, from which today's reading is taken, is the latest historical book of the Hebrew Bible. It describes the re-establishment of the People of Israel, now the Jews, in and around Jerusalem, on their release from exile in Babylon. In the seventy years of exile they had developed a way of life based on the Law and marked by Sabbath, circumcision and ritual food; this distinguished them not only from the Babylonians, but also from those inhabitants of Judaea who had not been dragged into captivity. It was only those who were passionate for the Lord and this way of life who returned to the ruins of Jerusalem. Others stayed in more comfortable exile! Ezra, the expert in the Law, and Nehemiah, commissioned by the King of Persia (in whose empire Judaea lay), were at different times leaders of the community. In this scene Ezra reads out and so promulgates the Law in Jerusalem, to the acclaim of the people. What a contrast to the scene in the synagogue at Nazareth where Jesus reads out the passage from Isaiah (the clue to his way of life and that of his followers) - only to be rejected by his own people!

What does this reading from Nehemiah have to say to us about the importance of God's word?

Second Reading: *The Body of Christ*

1 Corinthians 12:12-14. 27

Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptised, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink. Nor is the body to be identified with any one of its many parts. Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it.

“ Like parts of the body, none is more important than any other. ”

Following directly on from last Sunday's reading, Paul (in today's passage) shows just why the different gifts of the Spirit must be used for the common purpose of building up the community. He compares the community which lives with the life of the Spirit to a human body. For the effective functioning of the human body each highly diverse organ must play its part, contribute its own particular speciality. To prevent the individual Corinthians becoming proud and possessive of their own particular gifts, Paul stresses that, like parts of the body, none is more important than any other. Is it less serious if your liver fails or your kidneys? This comparison of a community to a human body is common in ancient literature, but nowhere else is the community as a body described as the body of a particular person in the way that Paul designates the Corinthian Christian community as the Body of Christ. The Body which lives by the life-principle of Christ's Spirit is Christ's own Body.

What makes the Body of Christ so different from any other body?

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

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