

THE *Wednesday*
WORD



Encountering Christ
The Wednesday Prayer Custom
for Homes, Schools & Parishes

Prayerfully preparing for Sunday Mass with special prayers for our school families



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.



Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present. Read the Gospel, 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.

1

Read
The Gospel for Sunday 4th August 2024
THE BREAD OF LIFE

When the people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they found him on the other side, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered, "I tell you most solemnly, you are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you, for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal." Then they said to him, "What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?" Jesus gave them this answer, "This is working for God: you must believe in the one he has sent." So they said, "What sign will you give to show us that we should believe in you? What work will you do? Our fathers had manna to eat in the desert; as scripture says: He gave them bread from heaven to eat." Jesus answered, "I tell you most solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "give us that bread always." Jesus answered, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst."

Taken from John 6:24-35 The Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

2

Reflect
After reading the Gospel, did any words stand out? If they did, ponder or discuss them before proceeding with the reflection.

After the account of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, Jesus explains the significance of the event. First he stresses that its importance lies not in the material food that goes bad, but in that of which the food is a sign. The people must understand the sign-value of the food, its ultimate fulfilment in Jesus of the manna in the desert: we do not live by bread alone but by every word which comes from the mouth of God. The whole explanation is built on a contrast between Moses and Jesus, between the food given by Moses and that given by Jesus. Jesus is the bread of life as the eucharistic bread, and also as revelation. We often concentrate exclusively on the eucharistic meaning of this chapter. This introduction to the Bread of Life discourse, however, emphasises that it is belief and understanding which is first required, and only then does Jesus begin to explain the deeper meaning of the bread. Jesus gives the explanation of what he has done in the synagogue at Capernaum, and – after the manner of Jewish sermons of the time – each phrase of the scriptural quotation from the Book of Exodus is commented on in turn: Bread from heaven / he gave them / to eat.

If this miraculous feeding is a sign, what is it a sign of?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

3

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. Thank God for any insight you may have received.

Then ask God to bless you with a spiritual gift to help you act on any resolution you have made. Perhaps: love, hope, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, patience, humility, joy, forgiveness, self-control, courage, generosity, faith or something else.

4

Pray for Families

This Wednesday's word for our school families is NOURISH!

After praying for your loved ones, please remember to pray for our present and future Church, particularly for the families connected to our schools. You may want to conclude this special weekly time with a simple prayer such as:

St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church, pray for us. Mary, Star of Evangelisation, pray for us. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of **Sunday 4th August 2024**



1st Reading: Exodus 16:2-4.12-15

Manna from Heaven

The whole community of the sons of Israel began to complain against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness and said to them, "Why did we not die at the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we were able to sit down to pans of meat and could eat bread to our heart's content! As it is, you have brought us to this wilderness to starve this whole company to death!" Then the Lord said to Moses, "Now I will rain down bread for you from the heavens. Each day the people are to go out and gather the day's portion; I propose to test them in this way to see whether they will follow my law or not. I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel. Say this to them, 'Between the two evenings you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have bread to your heart's content. Then you will learn that I, the Lord, am your God.'" And so it came about: quails flew up in the evening, and they covered the camp; in the morning there was a coating of dew all round the camp. When the coating of dew lifted, there on the surface of the desert was a thing delicate, powdery, as fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When they saw this, the sons of Israel said to one another, "What is that?" not knowing what it was. "That," said Moses to them, "is the bread the Lord gives you to eat."

The journey of the people of Israel through the desert of Sinai is regarded in the Bible from two quite different angles. From one angle it is the time of perfect harmony between God and his people, the honeymoon period when God was with his people Israel and when the people walked with him, trusting him on their journey in the wilderness. From the other angle it is seen as the beginning of a murmuring against the Lord, which will grow into the infidelities which eventually will lead to Israel's punishment by the exile to Babylon. This account of bread from heaven shows both Israel's impatience with the Lord and the Lord's supreme patience with Israel. The story demonstrates how God cared for his people and provided them with food during a generation's wandering in the savagely inhospitable desert of Sinai - a huge, infertile expanse of rock and sand, where virtually nothing grows. This care is focussed on manna, a sweet substance excreted from bushes on Sinai in a way which Israel found miraculous. The story has grown in the telling: it is linked to keeping the Sabbath, for manna could not be harvested on the Sabbath. Secondly, with typical Hebrew wordplay, this odd substance is linked to the Hebrew word manhu, meaning 'What is it?'

What does this pattern of the people's infidelity tell us about humanity and about God?



2nd Reading: Ephesians 4:17.20-24

A New Creation in Christ

I want to urge you in the name of the Lord, not to go on living the aimless kind of life that pagans live. Now that is hardly the way you have learnt from Christ, unless you failed to hear him properly when you were taught what the truth is in Jesus. You must give up your old way of life; you must put aside your old self, which gets corrupted by following illusory desires. Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth.

In his great classic letter to the Romans Paul teaches that by being baptised into Christ's death we have been joined with Christ in his resurrection and become a new being, fused with Christ or grafted into Christ. He sees us as living with Christ's life-principle, the Spirit, rather than our old corrupt life-principle. In First Corinthians he enlarges on the ways of life which this brings, the varied gifts of the Spirit which together make up the Christian body, the Body of Christ. Now, in Ephesians, we see a consequence of this. The Christian body is repeatedly described as a New Man, a new creation, after the model of Christ, the Second Adam. What does all this talk of 'new creation' amount to in real terms? Firstly, it poses the question whether we have really been renewed. Are my values and attitudes radically new as a Christian? Do they differ from the priorities which I would have without Christianity?

How do I best use my talents to build up the Body of Christ?

By being baptised into Christ's death we have become a new being.

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

**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**