



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 2nd December 2018 - The First 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 2nd December 2018 (Luke 21:25-28. 34-36): Liberation is Near at Hand

Jesus said to his disciples, "There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand. Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man."



3 Reflect

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

The first Sunday gospel of the year (and the liturgical year begins in Advent) is also in a way the last gospel of the previous year. It comes at the end of Jesus's ministry, when he is preparing his disciples for their own ministry - in succession to him. Jesus is speaking to them on the Mount of Olives, looking down on the white city of Jerusalem, glittering in the sunshine. The city is soon to be destroyed by the Romans, with dreadful horrors of famine, massacre, burnings and executions. This is seen as a foretaste of the end of the world when Jesus, the Son of Man, comes to save his people. We do not know when this will happen, and, more importantly, when it will happen for us, when we will meet the Son of Man and be judged and saved by him. But our Christian faith is a guarantee that it will be a moment of God's mercy, whenever it occurs. We must look forward to it, and have it ever present before our mind. But we would be fooling ourselves if we think that there are no struggles and trials and hardships to be undergone on the way. Why is the passage appointed for the first Sunday of Advent, the turning-point between the years? Because the birth of Jesus at Christmas, for which we are beginning to prepare, is a significant move towards the fulfilment of the promises of salvation, the coming of Christ as a baby - with all the budding potential of a baby.

What does Jesus really mean by these prophecies of catastrophic turmoil in the universe? How does Jesus want us to face turmoil and troubles in life?

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 2nd December 2018



First Reading: *The Branch for David*

Jeremiah 33:14-16

See, the days are coming - it is the Lord who speaks - when I am going to fulfil the promise I made to the House of Israel and the House of Judah: "In those days and at that time, I will make a virtuous Branch grow for David, who shall practise honesty and integrity in the land. In those days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell in confidence. And this is the name the city will be called: The Lord-our-integrity."

At the darkest moment of Israel's history, when the storm-clouds of invasion were gathering, and the threat of Babylonian conquest and subsequent exile seemed almost inevitable, comes this prophecy from the mouth of Jeremiah that the promise made long ago to David will not fail. Jerusalem will be sacked, but the promise remains that the city will be named 'The Lord is our Integrity' or, more accurately, he is our 'Saving Justice'. The justice of God is not like human justice which is conformity with the law. It is God's fulfilment of his promises made to Abraham, Moses and David. So, at this dire moment, Jeremiah renews those promises that the stock of David will never fail, and gives a corresponding symbolic name to the city of David. Today's gospel speaks of another destruction of Jerusalem, that wrought by the Romans in AD 70, and looks beyond it to the final coming of Christ. So several layers may be uncovered in this reading: God's promise, seemingly lost when the Babylonians sack Jerusalem, will be restored by the coming of Christ at the incarnation, and then by the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, which is the prelude to and promise of the final coming of Christ. In all these events the Lord is our Saving Justice.

How does Jesus bring the Saving Justice of God to the world?

Second Reading: *The Coming of the Lord Jesus*

1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

May the Lord be generous in increasing your love and make you love one another and the whole human race as much as we love you. And may he so confirm your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless in the sight of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all his saints. Finally, brothers, we urge you and appeal to you in the Lord Jesus to make more and more progress in the kind of life that you are meant to live: the life that God wants, as you learnt from us, and as you are already living it. You have not forgotten the instructions we gave you on the authority of the Lord Jesus.

Paul gives instructions about living in holiness while waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Each year the Church reminds us of the final coming of the Lord, which is to be the end of the world as we know it. In the Old Testament the 'Day of the Lord' is the day when God will come to re-establish all things, to put wrongs right, to punish the wicked and reward the righteous. In the New Testament, from this earliest letter of Paul onwards, this Day of the Lord is the Day of the Lord Jesus. It is pictured as a day when the Lord Jesus will come in a triumphal procession 'with all his holy ones', to be joined first by those who have died in the Lord, and then by those who are still living. For Paul, the Day of the Lord is so dominated by his triumph that he does not even mention or envisage punishments for the wicked. The Lord will overcome all evil, sweeping all before him, and will carry all with him in his triumphal procession. Writing later to the Corinthians, Paul envisages that Christ will put all things under his feet, even the last enemy, death, and he will then hand over the Kingdom to his Father.

What is the "kind of life" that the Lord Jesus wants us to live?

“The Lord will overcome all evil.”

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

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