



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2019 - The Twenty 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 8<sup>th</sup> September 2019 (Luke 14:25-33): The Cost of Discipleship**

Great crowds accompanied Jesus on his way and he turned and spoke to them. "If any man comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple. Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it? Otherwise, if he laid the foundation and then found himself unable to finish the work, the onlookers would all start making fun of him and saying, 'Here is a man who started to build and was unable to finish.' Or again, what king marching to war against another king would not first sit down and consider whether with ten thousand men he could stand up to the other who advanced against him with twenty thousand? If not, then while the other king was still a long way off, he would send envoys to sue for peace. So in the same way, none of you can be my disciple unless he gives up all his possessions."



**3** Reflect

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

*Jesus does not pull his punches, and here delivers a series of devastating body-blows to anyone who is looking for easy discipleship. All through this journey which culminates in Jesus' own death at Jerusalem the cost of discipleship has been a recurrent theme: 'Let the dead bury their dead' (13th Sunday), the Parable of the Rich Fool (18th Sunday), 'From one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded' (19th Sunday), 'Father against son, son against father' (20th Sunday), and now 'Hate father and mother' and 'Give up all your possessions'. A certain amount of the vigour of these demands may be attributed to a Semitic (Hebrew/Aramaic) mode of expression (they would often use superlatives and rarely use comparatives), but there is no doubt about the absolute demands made on the disciple. When Jesus made these demands he knew what lay ahead of him, and was only asking his disciples to follow his own course. We must count the cost before beginning to build the tower. Most of us have, of course, already started to build the tower by responding to Jesus' call. There is no turning back from the plough (13th Sunday); only pray for a courage and loyalty which exceed our own powers.*

**Why does Jesus use such fierce language? What is the hardest thing about trying to be a disciple of Christ?**

**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 8<sup>th</sup> September 2019

## First Reading: *In Praise of Divine Wisdom*

### Wisdom 9:13-18

What man can know the intentions of God? Who can divine the will of the Lord? The reasonings of mortals are unsure and our intentions unstable; for a perishable body presses down the soul, and this tent of clay weighs down the teeming mind. It is hard enough for us to work out what is on earth, laborious to know what lies within our reach; who, then, can discover what is in the heavens? As for your intention, who could have learnt it, had you not granted Wisdom and sent your holy spirit from above? Thus have the paths of those on earth been straightened and men been taught what pleases you, and saved, by Wisdom.

*This lovely passage is the conclusion of Solomon's prayer for heavenly Wisdom, saying that heavenly Wisdom and the true knowledge of the things of God are beyond human grasp. If we cannot fully understand the visible world around us, how can we hope to reach an understanding of the divinity beyond the awareness of all our senses? The prayer is put in the mouth of King Solomon, who in the Old Testament is almost the personification of human wisdom; these are the sort of words he may have used because Solomon reigned in the 10th century BC and the Book of Wisdom was composed at Alexandria only shortly before the birth of Christ. The recognition at this moment that divine Wisdom lies well beyond the reach of all human faculties is all the more impressive in view of the achievements of the great philosophical schools of Alexandria. Such occasional poems, scattered throughout the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament, are a valuable reminder that God is beyond all human comprehension in wisdom, in strength and in beauty. Perhaps the most wonderful and overwhelming of all is the experience of God conveyed in the poems of Job 38-41. These poems may also be seen as praise of the Wisdom of God which will become flesh and be manifest to us in Christ Jesus.*

*'Of what we cannot speak, it is better to keep silent.' Is this true of God?*

## Second Reading: *Paul and Philemon*

### Philemon 9-10. 12-17

This is Paul writing, an old man now and, what is more, still a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I am appealing to you for a child of mine, whose father I became while wearing these chains: I mean Onesimus. I am sending him back to you, and with him - I could say - a part of my own self. I should have liked to keep him with me; he could have been a substitute for you, to help me while I am in the chains that the Good News has brought me. However, I did not want to do anything without your consent; it would have been forcing your act of kindness, which should be spontaneous. I know you have been deprived of Onesimus for a time, but it was only so that you could have him back for ever, not as a slave any more, but something much better than a slave, a dear brother; especially dear to me, but how much more to you, as a blood-brother as well as a brother in the Lord. So if all that we have in common means anything to you, welcome him as you would me.

*Paul's letter to Philemon – and this reading makes up about half the letter – is a friendly little note from Paul to Philemon about a slave of Philemon's called Onesimus, who has been serving Paul in his imprisonment, and has become a Christian. There are two theories about why Onesimus was with Paul: either Onesimus ran away from his master and took refuge with Paul, or Philemon lent Onesimus to Paul for a limited period. In either case Paul is now sending Onesimus back, and at the same time putting pressure on Philemon to send him Onesimus for a further period. The most important and attractive element in the letter is Paul's affectionate brotherhood with the slave, now a Christian. After accepting slavery within Christianity for a long period, Christians came to realise that the affection and brotherhood expressed here by Paul make slavery among Christians intolerable. A further step was taken later when it was recognised that any enslavement of human beings is incompatible with Christianity, and that all human beings must be treated as brothers and sisters, equal before the Lord. It is a classic case of the slow deepening of the understanding of Christian morality.*

*Is there someone that you find difficult to accept as an equal?*

“ All human beings must be treated as brothers and sisters, equal before the Lord. ”

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