



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 22nd January 2023 - 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 22nd January 2023 - The Call of the first Disciples (Matthew 4:12-23)

Hearing that John had been arrested Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled: "Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali! Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan, Galilee of the nations! The people that lived in darkness has seen a great light; on those who dwell in the land and shadow of death a light has dawned." From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast in the lake with their net, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." And they left their nets at once and followed him. Going on from there he saw another pair of brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in their boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. At once, leaving their boat and their father, they followed him. He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people.

3 Reflect

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

This is the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Matthew first introduces us to Galilee, characteristically quoting the scriptures to show that they are being fulfilled, and in what way. Galilee is called 'Galilee of the gentiles' only in this passage, and the presence of gentiles was not a particularly notable feature of Galilee. Archaeology shows that Jewish observance was strong in the region. Contemporary literature indicates that there was a lively tradition of prayerful charismatic rabbis with a warm devotion to the Lord. Jesus begins his ministry by proclaiming the imminence of the Kingdom of God, and this will be the subject of all his activity. Then he begins to form the new Israel by calling his team together. The Christian imagination tends to combine this scene with the scene of the Baptist in the Jordan Valley in the Gospel of John, which suggests that at least Peter and Andrew among the disciples had already some knowledge of Jesus. But today's narrative must be heard on its own, and the staggering factor is that this is the first time at any rate the sons of Zebedee have set eyes on Jesus. As he passes by, Jesus calls them, and such is the electrifying power of his charismatic personality that they simply drop everything and follow this total stranger – immediately, as the evangelist stresses each time.

Do I ever follow Jesus' call immediately and unconditionally?

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 22nd January 2023



First Reading: *Light in the Land of Darkness*

Isaiah 8:23 - 9:3

In days past the Lord humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in days to come he will confer glory on the Way of the Sea on the far side of Jordan, province of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. You have made their gladness greater, you have made their joy increase; they rejoice in your presence as men rejoice at harvest time, as men are happy when they are dividing the spoils. For the yoke that was weighing on him, the bar across his shoulders, the rod of his oppressor, these you break as on the day of Midian.

This prophecy of Isaiah is chosen as the first reading today because in the gospel reading Matthew sees its fulfilment in the healing activity of Jesus in Galilee, the region once allotted to the two northern tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. Not long before the total collapse of the Northern Kingdom of Israel their area was invaded and devastated by the mighty power of Assyria. They are therefore given as the archetype of the ruined territory which will be restored to light, joy and rich harvest when God comes to save his people. In fact Galilee has rich soil and wide plains. The Jewish historian at the time of Jesus is lyrical about the abundance and variety of fruit grown there. The prophecy of restoration is expressed in the past tense ('have seen a great light') to emphasize its certainty: it is so sure that it can be described as though it had already happened, a tense known as 'the prophetic past'. The passage of Isaiah goes on, after our reading, to speak of the child to be born, who will bring about this transformation. He will be 'Wonder Counsellor, Prince of Peace'.

What is the most important element which would restore our country to God's service?

Second Reading: *A Divided Community*

1 Corinthians 1:10-13.17

I appeal to you, brothers, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make up the differences between you, and instead of disagreeing among yourselves, to be united again in your belief and practice. From what Chloe's people have been telling me, my dear brothers, it is clear that there are serious differences among you. What I mean are all these slogans that you have, like: 'I am for Paul,' 'I am for Apollos,' 'I am for Cephas,' 'I am for Christ.' Has Christ been parcelled out? Was it Paul that was crucified for you? Were you baptised in the name of Paul? For Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the Good News, and not to preach that in the terms of philosophy in which the crucifixion of Christ cannot be expressed.

It is hardly surprising that the Christians at Corinth were a divided community; there were so many different levels of employment and wealth: financiers, dockers, tent-makers, administrators and many others in that town with its double port, its booming trade, its biennial games and supporting trades. Paul shows us that there were also cliques claiming different personal loyalties. Some claimed to be Paul's own followers. Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria and a notable orator; perhaps he had the intellectual following. Cephas is the Aramaic name for Peter; his following may have been Christians sprung from Judaism who wanted to keep their Jewish practices in food, circumcision and Sabbath-observance. Paul will have none of this party politics, one group hurling slogans at another. They would not even come together as a genuine community at the Eucharist. Paul had baptised people to be not his own followers but followers of Christ. Later in the letter he will explain that Christians must form a single organic body, all working together in harmony, each with a special task and special gifts, but all contributing to the well-being of the whole. This is his basic vision of the Christian body, all living with the one life of Christ.

Are there any echoes of such disunity in your community?

“ All working together in harmony...
all living with the one life of Christ. ”

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

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