



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 8th August 2021 - The Nineteenth Sunday of 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 8th August 2021 (John 6:41-51): Belief as Eternal Life

The Jews were complaining to each other about Jesus, because he had said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." "Surely this is Jesus son of Joseph," they said. "We know his father and mother. How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus said in reply, "Stop complaining to each other. No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'They will all be taught by God', and to hear the teaching of the Father, and learn from it, is to come to me. Not that anybody has seen the Father, except the one who comes from God: he has seen the Father. I tell you most solemnly, everybody who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a man may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world."



3 Reflect

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

We always think of this Bread of Life discourse as centred on the Eucharist, but the first part of it is centred on the bread of life as the revelation of God. In a similar way, the Liturgy of the Word which proclaims the revelation of God through Scripture is the first part of the Mass. As we said last week, in this discourse Jesus is following the pattern of Jewish sermons with a detailed commentary upon the text from Exodus: 'Bread from heaven he gave them to eat'. Then half-way through the sermon comes a quotation from the prophets, a sort of half-time booster quote. This quotation from Isaiah appears in today's gospel reading: 'They will all be taught by God'. In context this quote occurs in a passage exploring the personal relationship of each believer to the Lord. The Lord will sow in our hearts individually the knowledge of himself, so that each of us has a personal bond with God which is cultivated by prayer. If we listen to the Father and learn from him, we come to Jesus, who has seen the Father. So in this reading the emphasis is on listening, seeing, believing the revelation of the Father. Faith is no abstract set of truths but a personal knowing, just as we know those we love on earth. Only at the end of today's reading do we move on to the topic of eating the Bread of Life.

How and where do you listen to what God has to say to you?

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 8th August 2021



First Reading: *Elijah's Breakfast*

1 Kings 19:4-8

Elijah went into the wilderness, a day's journey, and sitting under a furze bush wished he were dead. "Lord," he said, "I have had enough. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down and went to sleep. But an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked round, and there at his head was a scone baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. But the angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too long for you." So he got up and ate and drank, and strengthened by that food he walked for forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

The wicked Queen Jezebel had slaughtered all the prophets of the Lord except Elijah. Elijah had then mounted a competition with the prophets of Baal, challenging them to bring fire down from heaven to consume the bull they were sacrificing to Baal. Despite Elijah's taunts, they had failed miserably, leaving the field for an easy victory by Elijah, whose God produced a flawless display of pyrotechnics, climaxing in a splendid holocaust. Nevertheless, Elijah still felt threatened; he fled and announced that he had had enough of life, whereupon he fell asleep in a sulk. God's reaction to this petulant behaviour is touching. First he wakes Elijah up to an excellent breakfast, then he provides a sufficiently substantial lunch to fortify Elijah for a forty-day trek through the Sinai desert. Typical of God's forgiveness and indulgence! His chosen ones complain to him roundly, and he treats them pretty roughly at times. Look at the relationship between Jeremiah or Job and God! As Teresa of Avila put it, 'If you treat your friends like that, no wonder you have so few of them.' At least these examples show us that we are expected to treat God with intimacy and frankness, voicing our complaints to our Father.

What does the relationship between Elijah and God have to teach you about your own relationship with God?

Second Reading: *The Seal of the Spirit*

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God who has marked you with his seal for you to be set free when the day comes. Never have grudges against others, or lose your temper, or raise your voice to anybody, or call each other names, or allow any sort of spitefulness. Be friends with one another, and kind, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ. Try, then, to imitate God, as children of his that he loves, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.

In the early Church confirmation was known as the sealing in the Spirit, a rather beautiful image, which stems from this passage. In the ancient world, long before general literacy, everyone had a personal seal to mark documents or possessions. This text is telling us that we are the soft wax, which sets permanently at confirmation, so marking us personally as belonging to God, proclaiming that we are his. The Spirit is ever alert to our needs, supporting us before we realise our need of support, wise in guidance, unlimited in generosity, tireless in forgiveness. Being sealed by the Spirit commits us to this same sort of consideration for others.

What does it mean to be marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit?

“Unlimited in generosity, tireless in forgiveness: being sealed by the Spirit commits us to this same sort of consideration for others.”

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

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