

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 18th August 2024
EATING THE BREAD OF LIFE

Jesus said to the crowd, “I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.” Then the Jews started arguing with one another: “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” they said. Jesus replied, “I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live forever.”

Taken from John 6:51-58 The Twentieth 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.

This is the last of the readings from the Bread of Life Discourse in John’s Gospel. In today’s passage, we move on from seeing Christ as the Wisdom of God, who must be accepted and believed, to a reflection on the sacrament of eating the bread of life. These two themes correspond to the two halves of the Mass, first the service of the Word, then the Eucharistic banquet. We are all so diet-conscious nowadays that it is quite obvious that the food we eat affects us. By eating the Body of Christ we are assimilated into him. But, just as, if I am sick, food does me no good and can even harm me, so if I eat Christ sacramentally without wanting to be moulded into him, it does me no good at all. That is why Paul complained that the Corinthian people were answerable for the death of Christ. And drinking the blood of Christ? Blood is the sign of life – if there is no blood, there is no life – and God is the Lord of life and death. So if I receive Christ’s blood I take on his life, his divine life, as the gift of God. That has alarming side-effects: it means I share Christ’s life with other Christians.

We all live with the same life’s blood. Do I really share my life, my talents, my goods with others, knowing that we share the same life of Jesus?

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 words for our school families are HOLY COMMUNION!

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 18th August 2024**



1st Reading: Proverbs 9:1-6

The Invitation of Wisdom

Wisdom has built herself a house; she has erected her seven pillars; she has slaughtered her beasts, prepared her wine; she has laid her table. She has despatched her maidservants and proclaimed from the city's heights: "Who is ignorant? Let him step this way." To the fool she says, "Come and eat my bread; drink the wine I have prepared! Leave your folly and you will live; walk in the ways of perception."



In the Old Testament divine Wisdom is often represented as a woman (the word 'wisdom' is feminine in both Greek and Hebrew), inviting to her banquet all who are willing to come. The only qualification is that those invited must be simple and open to learning, those whom Jesus in the gospel will call 'meek and humble of heart'. Especially after the Exile in Babylon the Israelites realized that they could not rely on their own strength and wisdom, but must turn to God in humility and with confidence. Such emphasis on lowliness before God is a feature of the post-exilic prophets and their spirituality. It is exemplified also in the Infancy Narratives of the gospels, especially in Luke, where all the characters are poor and destitute, powerless to help themselves, and relying on the Lord's favour: the parents of John the Baptist and of Jesus, the shepherds, the elderly Simeon and Anna. This invitation from Wisdom points to the imagery of the messianic banquet, and to the meals in the gospels where Jesus is seen feasting and relaxing with his often disreputable and disadvantaged friends. It prepares also for Jesus' invitations to the banquet of the Eucharist, where we are those helpless and disreputable friends!

How can we acquire this divine Wisdom?

Sing hymns to Christ.



2nd Reading: Ephesians 5:15-20

Songs of the Spirit

Be very careful about the sort of lives you lead, like intelligent and not like senseless people. This may be a wicked age, but your lives should redeem it. And do not be thoughtless but recognise what is the will of the Lord. Do not drug yourselves with wine - this is simply dissipation; be filled with the Spirit. Sing the words and tunes of the psalms and hymns when you are together, and go on singing and chanting to the Lord in your hearts, so that always and everywhere you are giving thanks to God who is our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Singing is a natural expression of joy and united harmony which has always occurred in the Church among the people of God from the very beginning, to express the joy and gratitude of Christians in the Lord. It seems that this instruction in the Letter to the Ephesians only continues and encourages the tradition. Already in Paul's letters there are buried a number of hymns, unlikely to have been written by him, but more probably heard and picked up from the different communities he visited. These hymns are in a style far more rhythmical and balanced than his own excited and argumentative writing. Special examples are the hymns to Christ in Philippians 2:6-11 and Colossians 1:15-20, but the letters to Timothy and Titus have several examples of snatches of hymns; there is also a section of a hymn immediately before this reading from Ephesians. The earliest outside witness to the Christian liturgy, a letter from the provincial governor Pliny to the Roman Emperor, also describes the Christians meeting on a set day (presumably Sunday) to sing hymns 'to Christ as to a God' before having what he describes as a perfectly ordinary meal together (presumably the Eucharist). So the singing of hymns has a venerable tradition in Christianity.

What is your favourite hymn, and why?

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**