



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023 - The First Sunday in 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 Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023 (Mark 13:33-37): The Watcher at the Door

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I am saying to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

**3** Reflect

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

*This brief parable of the master returning unexpectedly is typical of Jesus' vivid way of speaking. The message is typical, too, because Jesus was constantly stressing that there is no time to lose. When he came in his earthly ministry he again and again challenged his hearers to make up their minds NOW, to change their ways NOW. He challenges us to do the same. We can hear the rattle of the returning Master's key in the lock. There is no time to hide the contraband, to pull our uniforms straight before greeting the Master at his entry. Even if we do not think that the world's end is imminent, even if death is not threatening, every moment counts, every decision is for or against Jesus. Saints are rumoured to have said that, if they received the news that they were to die that night, they would carry on doing what they were doing anyway. Saints can do this, because they are ready for the coming of the Lord. But what about us? If we need to put things a bit more in order to prepare for the Lord's coming, is there any valid reason to delay? The four weeks of Advent are a good time to clean things up for the Lord's coming.*

**What would you like to change about your life in preparation for the coming of the Lord?**

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 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023



## First Reading: *A Thrill of Hope*

### Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1. 3-8

You, Lord, yourself are our Father, our Redeemer is your ancient name. Why, Lord, leave us to stray from your ways and harden our hearts against fearing you? Return, for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your inheritance. Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down - at your Presence the mountains would melt. No ear has heard, no eye has seen any god but you act like this for those who trust him. You guide those who act with integrity and keep your ways in mind. You were angry when we were sinners; we had long been rebels against you. We were all like men unclean; all that integrity of ours like filthy clothing. We have all withered like leaves and our sins blew us away like the wind. No one invoked your name or roused himself to catch hold of you. For you hid your face from us and gave us up to the power of our sins. And yet, Lord, you are our Father; we the clay, you the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

*Each Advent Sunday begins with a reading from Isaiah, for Isaiah is the great prophet of the Messiah. This reading is taken from the latest part of the Book of Isaiah. After the return to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, the Jews were passionately awaiting the coming of the Messiah. They were conscious that they had sinned and deserved their punishment, but still longed for the liberation from foreign interference which the Messiah would bring. After the coming of Christ we too are waiting - waiting for the fulfilment of the sovereignty or kingship of God. Jesus brought the pledge of this kingship by his miracles of healing, his welcome to sinners, his teaching about the Kingdom, and above all by his Resurrection from the dead. We no longer have any reason to fear death, but we are conscious of our own failings, of our co-operation with evil and long for the strength and fidelity which wholehearted membership of God's Kingdom would bring us.*

**How do I need to change to become a fully committed member of God's Kingdom and to welcome the Messiah into my life?**

## Second Reading: *Waiting for the Lord Jesus*

### 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace. I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you have been enriched in so many ways, especially in your teachers and preachers; the witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed; and he will keep you steady and without blame until the last day, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, because God by calling you has joined you to his Son, Jesus Christ; and God is faithful.

*This reading from the opening of Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians is full of the excitement of the Spirit. The young community of Christians at Corinth flourished in the activity of the Holy Spirit, not just by extraordinary things like speaking in tongues, but by healing and teaching and guidance. Even being a good member of a family (husband, wife, parent, child) is an activity guided by the Spirit. All this is preparing for the final coming of Christ, for all Christian activity, no matter how humdrum, is given life and vitality by the Spirit of Christ. In Paul's day there was a freshness and enthusiasm which is sometimes lacking in our Church today. Let us ask at Christmas for a new infusion of the Spirit which will help us to burst the bonds which keep us back from full service to the Lord.*

**How do you see the Spirit at work in your own life?**

“ All Christian activity, no matter how humdrum,  
is given life and vitality by the Spirit of Christ. ”

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