

Here's a text if you only have a minute ...

In your love remember me.

Psalm

Is it not what you do that is unjust?

First Reading

Always consider the other person to be better than yourself.

Second Reading

For the Son of God became human so that we might become God.

St Athanasius of Alexandria (d.373)

The Word became flesh to make us 'partakers of the divine nature'.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, § 460

Father, you show your almighty power
in your mercy and forgiveness.

Continue to fill us with your gifts of love.

Help us to hurry towards the eternal life you promise
and come to share in the joys of your kingdom.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:

Ezekiel 18: 25–28; Psalm 24 (25); Philippians 2: 1–11; Matthew 21: 28–32

Jorge Cocco Santángelo (b.1936)
Parable of the Two Sons © Jorgecocco.com



Which of the two did the father's will?

If you'd like to receive Prego by email each week, sign up at
www.stbeunosoutreach.wordpress.com

ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

Let this MIND
be in YOU that was
also in
Christ Jesus



Twenty-sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time
Year A, 1st October 2023

Christ obedient unto death

This week's readings call us to turn to the Lord, modelling our actions and words on Christ Jesus.

The **First Reading**, from the prophet Ezekiel, gives hope. Those who think better of their situation and renounce it are given life.

The **Psalm** reveals the heartfelt prayer of someone turning away from their sin and embracing the gift of new life.

The apostle Paul shows what it is to give up sin and take on the mind of Christ (**Second Reading**). The Church at Philippi was on the whole a source of joy for Paul, but here he appeals for greater unity. This is reached only by imitating the humility of Christ, who became obedient even unto death. Out of love for us, Christ even gives up his divinity, freely and without reservation.

Amidst growing tension following the overturning of the money changers' tables in the Temple, the religious leaders confront Jesus, demanding to know the source of his authority. Jesus tells the parable of the two sons, and poses a question, causing the chief priests to reflect on the difference between putting self or others first. By answering correctly, thereby aligning themselves to the boy who said he would do his Father's will but then doesn't, they convict themselves (**Gospel**).

This week, let us keep close to Christ, who obeyed the Father perfectly in word and deed. And let us remember that it is never too late for us to turn to God and follow God's will.



Opening Prayer

O God, who manifest your almighty power
above all by pardoning and showing mercy,
bestow, we pray, your grace abundantly upon us
and make those hastening to attain your promises
heirs to the treasures of heaven.

Second Reading Philippians 2: 1–11

If our life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all, or the Spirit that we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy, then be united in your convictions and united in your love with a common purpose and a common mind. That is the one thing which would make me completely happy. There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people's interests instead. In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus:

His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as we are; and being as all people are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names, so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

I spend some time becoming still. I ask the Spirit, whom we share in common, to unite me in love and to the common mind. I breathe slowly, and gently read this letter of St Paul and the wonderful hymn of humility that makes up the second part. I pause whenever I feel moved.

Christ, empty and humble, does not countenance competition or conceit – he puts all others first. I ponder the hymn in light of the first part of the reading. It is Christ's choice to be in solidarity with those 'at the bottom' by emptying himself. What is striking me here? I spend some time pondering this great decision of the God of love to become human for me.

The hymn is an antidote to the 'honour culture' of Jesus's time – and indeed our own. In all honesty, do I at times desire a more upward movement – toward greater honour, recognition, status? Where, in what, or rather, in whom, do I find my true worth?

I may like to end by pausing with these lines, the first from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (§ 460) and the second from St Athanasius (d.373):
*The Word became flesh to make us 'partakers of the divine nature';
For the Son of God became human so that we might become God.*

Gospel Matthew 21: 28–32

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people, 'What is your opinion? A man had two children. He went and said to the first, "My child, you go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not go", but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, "Certainly, sir", but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?' 'The first', they said. Jesus said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, a pattern of true righteousness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.'

I take some slow, deep breaths and try to become still.
In time, I turn to the text.

I imagine Jesus standing before me, and hear him ask me the same question he asks the priests: 'What is your opinion?'.
He is looking to me for an answer.

How do I feel about his question ... about Jesus looking at me now?
How am I returning his gaze? Then, how do I answer?

I think over my life this past week.
What are the actions speaking louder than words?
Do I tend to pledge my discipleship in words only?
What is my attitude to apparent outsiders to the Kingdom?

How often do I pray for change of heart within me, opening me to a greater trust, a greater generosity?

Finally, I ponder Jesus himself.
How do I see him as the obedient Son who was faithful to the Father, whatever the cost to himself?

His obedience is out of love for me.
I reflect on this, keeping my gaze on him.

Then, what would I like to say to him? I take my time with this.

When I am ready, I end my prayer with words of gratitude.

Glory be to the Father ...