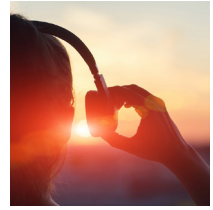




AMDG
FOURTH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME
YEAR B
31ST JANUARY 2021



Listen to his Voice!

OPENING PRAYER

Grant us, Lord our God,
that we may honour you with all our mind,
and love everyone in truth of heart.

As we live through these dark winter days, we may be comforted by the words of the *Psalmist*, who encourages us to listen to the Lord's voice and not to grumble as the Israelites did at Massah and Meribah in the desert.

In the *First Reading*, Moses announces a true prophet speaking God's words and commandments.

In the *Gospel*, we meet this true prophet in the person of Jesus, who teaches the people with authority, making a deep impression on his audience. Even unclean spirits obey him.

In the *Second Reading*, Paul, believing that the end of the world is near, encourages the Corinthians in an attempt to free them from all worry. Whatever their marital status, he urges them to focus their undivided attention on the Lord, showing their devotion to him.

This week I may want to pray for all those who find it difficult to listen to God's voice, especially if God chooses to speak through the people we meet. Perhaps I can also focus on keeping my full attention on the Lord, trusting that he will help me to avoid distractions from the one thing that matters: listening to him.

SECOND READING 1 CORINTHIANS 7: 32–35

Iwould like to see you free from all worry. An unmarried man can devote himself to the Lord's affairs, all he need worry about is pleasing the Lord; but a married man has to bother about the Lord's affairs and devote himself to pleasing his wife: he is torn two ways. In the same way an unmarried woman, like a young girl, can devote herself to the Lord's affairs; all she need worry about is being holy in body and spirit. The married woman, on the other hand, has to worry about the world's affairs and devote herself to pleasing her husband. I say this only to help you, not to put a halter round your necks, but simply to make sure that everything is as it should be, and that you give your undivided attention to the Lord.

As I come to pray today, I take a few moments to reflect on my mood. What has happened today, yesterday? Have I been able to feel the Lord's presence close to me, or has he seemed a long way away? Whatever I feel, I am here now, hoping to hear him speak to me through the words of Paul.

To help me be more receptive, I take a couple of deep breaths, then breathe normally. I may like to focus my attention on a favourite object, or perhaps the flickering light of a candle.

Then I slowly read the text. What is my immediate reaction?

Do I belong to any of these groups of people?

In what ways might Paul's words apply to me in 2021?

I may find that I want to focus on just one short phrase, and stay with that, such as: 'I would like to see you free from all worry'...

'I say this only to help you ...' or perhaps some other words.

Maybe I can imagine that Paul is speaking to me personally.

How does that make me feel? What do I want to say to him?

When I am ready to move on, I read the text again.

Everyone, irrespective of their marital status, is encouraged to give their 'undivided attention to the Lord'. I ponder. Do I do this myself?

I look around me: in what ways do people I know, love, and respect devote themselves to pleasing the Lord?

I speak to the Lord about what is in my heart.

Perhaps I ask him to help me, 'so that everything is as it should be' in everything I do in my own daily life.

Eventually, in my own words, I thank him for his help, and slowly take my leave.

GOSPEL MARK 1: 21-28

Jesus and his disciples went as far as Capernaum, and as soon as the sabbath came, he went to the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority.

In their synagogue just then there was a man possessed by an unclean spirit and it shouted, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.' But Jesus said sharply, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking each other what it all meant. 'Here is a teaching that is new,' they said, 'and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him.' And his reputation rapidly spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.

I settle in my chosen place of prayer, and let myself become still. In the quiet of the moment I feel God's loving gaze, and let his presence enfold me.

I read the text of the Gospel. Perhaps I can imagine myself sitting there in the synagogue listening to Jesus.

Although I don't have the words that Jesus uses, I notice how he speaks. What strikes me most about Jesus here? Perhaps his conviction ... his quiet authority ... or something else?

As I look around the synagogue, what do I see reflected in the faces of those with me? How do I feel as the power of this teaching touches me?

What do I find myself thinking and feeling as the mood changes, and I watch the scene unfold?

When I am ready, I look back on the scene and ponder what it means for me to acknowledge Jesus as the 'Holy One of God'.

What difference does this make to me?

In what ways do those around me recognise the message of Jesus in the way I live my life?

I share with the Lord what is in my heart, and offer my prayer that God will continue to deepen his life in me.

Bringing my time of prayer to a close, I thank the Lord for the gift of his love, and ask that I may see him more clearly, love him more dearly and follow him more nearly, day by day.

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet ...
to him you must listen.

First Reading

O that today you would listen to his voice!
'Harden not your hearts.'

Psalm

Give your undivided attention to the Lord.

Second Reading

'I know who you are: the Holy One of God.'

Gospel

This week's texts if you want to explore further:

Deuteronomy 18: 15–20; Psalm 94 (95); 1 Cor. 7: 32–35; Mark 1: 21–28



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
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JESUIT
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