



THE LORD'S DAY

4th Sunday of Easter (Year A)

The Watermead Apostolate offers this weekly page as a helpful guide and background to the readings used at the Catholic Mass for each Sunday of the Year.

The reading guides were written by Fr John Daley (RIP) who served as a Catholic priest in various parishes around the UK and world for 53 years.

Fr John co-founded Watermead in 1992 as a voice for people who wished to share understanding of living their faith through their God-given gifts and talents.

'The Lord's Day' incorporates some of those voices in this presentation and also through its many publications ~ books, resources, cards, music, etc.

Further information on what we produce, our story and the mission of our Christian apostolate can be found by visiting www.watermead-apostolate.co.uk

First Reading

Acts 2 : 14, 36-41

Pentecost is called "the birthday of the Church", the day when the apostles, formerly fearful, receive the Holy Spirit and the courage to preach Christ.

The Jewish feast of weeks (Leviticus 23:15-21) was originally an agricultural festival celebrated seven weeks after Passover, and took on the Greek name "Pentecost" (meaning 50 days), becoming a commemoration of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Pentecost thus became the ideal day for the giving of the New Law (Christ), and Peter's speech (2:14-36) is full of the marvel of who Jesus the Christ had become. It is the new age.

Today's reading tells of the people's being overwhelmed by Peter's words. His message is for them to repent (they are all sinners?), be baptised for forgiveness and receive the Holy Spirit. This is a blending of the Old baptism (cleansing forgiveness) and the New baptism (life in Christ). Pagans are to be included (v.39) but we remember Peter's surprise in Acts 10 when he is called to the house of Cornelius.

The number baptised is 3,000 in a single day. Where? How? Is this biblical numbers? We recall 600,000 families leaving Egypt together on Passover night (Exodus 12:37). What are biblical numbers?

THREE CHRISTIAN GOODS

The good preacher;
The good Christian;
The good shepherd.

Second Reading

1 Peter 2 : 20-25

Chapter 2 is swift-moving. Peter begins by encouraging an innocent childlike life as the Christian ideal, and then develops a powerful argument - based upon the rock, Jesus, who is the foundation of their lives. Because of him Christians live a life of spiritual strength which makes them a chosen race, a royal priesthood, an anointed and chosen people.

Being so blessed gives them the obligation of offering good example to the pagan peoples around them - by good lives, accepting lawful authority, being good citizens, acting justly towards all - even slaves quietly enduring cruel masters.

Our 21st century age of justice and peace, fair employment, Amnesty International, would not accept Roman imperial rule without a fight; our martyrs and missionaries would find no encouragement in this reading. Peter wants civil obedience, whatever the injustice, and in today's reading offers Jesus as the supreme example of suffering injustice rather than fighting or facing it. Today's Church is divided on these issues, afraid of political involvement.

Wisdom from the Saints

"While shepherds
saw with
wondering eyes
the shepherd
who made
the world"
Sedulius
(French Poet)



Gospel Reading

John 10 : 1-10

As we read today's Gospel we realise that Jesus is not the Good Shepherd. It is Jesus' hearers who are called to be shepherds - and Jesus is the gate of the sheepfold! Twice he tells us that (vv.7 & 9) and we find ourselves far from the gentle Good Shepherd of Luke 15:3-7 and more like the longing that Jesus seems to express in Matthew 9:36.

Jesus has been tussling with the blindness of those who choose not to see, in chapter 9, angry at and saddened by the poor spiritual leadership of the religious authorities. In verses 1-5 occurs the only parable in John's Gospel and, not surprisingly, his hearers do not understand his teaching.

The teaching expands toward his disciples and those who hear and read the Gospel: they/we are to be true shepherds by letting Christ show the road (the gate). The sheep ignore those who approach dishonestly, seeking their own advantage: the true shepherd will seek to enter by the gate, the authentic way.

Verse 10 finishes today's reading. Read on and you will discover a new teaching in which Jesus *is* the Good Shepherd (v.11&14). His images of shepherd and sheepfold gate do not belong together, but they are complementary: truth, love and service are the qualities of a good shepherd.

Questions of Faith

Biblical Numbers are an enjoyable game. We know that they are not exact - but what do they mean? There were 5,000 (not counting women and children), fed at some of the six stories of the feeding of the great crowd; 600,000 men (not counting women and children) who left Egypt on the night of the Passover; Enoch was 365 and Lamech 777 - two perfect ages; we read of 40 days and 40 years . . . Best of all, we read "on the third day" more than 25 times.

People of God

Father William had been an Anglican and brought much of that gentle faith and manner into his Catholic faith. He joined a religious order, was ordained priest and spent all his priestly life in parish work. His courtesy and gentle manner won everybody's liking. He enjoyed laughing and people found it easy to genuinely amuse him. He was always polite to the ladies, friendly but never familiar - every little girl a princess, and every married woman a queen. His bubbly personality encouraged many parish activities and in each parish he left the memory of a priest who loved and served God, who loved and looked after the people. When he moved parish he would remember and write to the many parishioners who were glad to keep contact. In the parish in which he died he had been able to do very little. He had come, really, to retire - to say his daily mass, a Sunday mass, and just to stroll the streets around the church. Everybody loved him, he belonged to the neighbourhood, and when he died the parish priest allowed people to visit the house and pray at the open coffin. An amazing number of people came to pray. Even in his retirement Fr William was a shepherd, and the people loved him.

This week I shall remember
in my prayer priests I've known.