



THE LORD'S DAY

6th 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 8 : 5-8, 14-17

Chapter 7 has been taken up with the story of Stephen's trial and martyrdom. His death became a spark to ignite a fire of hate and persecution against the Church (not yet called Christians). The apostles themselves stay to face the persecution (8:1) and we presume the main threat was against the Hellenists - who were strangers and foreigners from outside the Holy Land, by birth or family. A divided Church, some persecuted and some not, might have been destroyed - but divine providence was at work . . .

As a consequence of the persecution many fled to Samaria and to country areas of Judaea where there was less hostility. Perhaps another indication of racial tension: Samaritans welcoming Christians persecuted by the Jews. Saul (Hebrew "asked"), not yet Paul (Hebrew "little"), is a vicious example of the persecutor (8:3).

Today's reading now begins, and a new development of the Church. The Samaritans gladly welcome the Good News and Philip, one of the deacons ordained by Peter (6:1-6), becomes the Church's principal apostle: the deacon's full ministry seems to be as administrator and preacher of the word (6:2-4).

Questions of Faith

Martyrdom. When persecution against the Church begins, is it better to stay and face death or to flee and carry the Gospel elsewhere? That question arises for the Christian community early in the Acts of the Apostles, and we see both answers.

But the question belongs down the ages, and we might wonder how we would react? Does a father carry his family to safety or ask them to wait bravely for arrest and possible death? Does he renounce Christ (knowing God would understand) in order to stay to look after his family? St Thomas More died, putting family second: should we expect all fathers to act thus? Do we judge others?

Second Reading

1 Peter 3 : 15-18

Chapter 2 has urged the Christians to be a good example to pagans and loyal citizens, obedient to all lawful authority. Civil society and its requirements have a claim on Christian life, even to accepting the authority of the Roman emperor and the institution of slavery.

Chapter 3 narrows the focus to loving and faithful marriage and a sense of community in which the happiness of everyone is the concern of all. Sympathy, gentleness, compassion and modesty are the gifts of personality that bring blessing to the Church - an ideal of being Christ's loving family.

Then a terrible shadow looms - slander, suffering, even persecution. Peter accepts the Church will have to face these difficulties and urges courtesy and good conscience as the best answer to what hatred and jealousy might incite. Suffering is inevitable, he says, but suffer for right living rather than wrong-doing.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Brings blessing from suffering;
Allows suffering as blessing;
Loses love (Jesus) to gain love (Spirit).

People of God

Ss. Philip and James are two of the apostles about whom we know a little.

Philip came from Bethsaida in Galilee, as did Simon Peter and Andrew. He is mentioned only in Matthew, Mark and Luke's lists of the apostles, but is referred to several times in John - e.g. at the feeding of the 5,000 and at the Last Supper.

James is known as the son of Alphaeus and became head of the Church of Jerusalem when Peter left there to go to Antioch and Rome. We have one of his letters and we speak of him as the cousin of Jesus. James was stoned to death, according to the historian, Josephus, in AD62.

They are honoured as martyrs and their tomb is in the crypt of the Church of the 12 Apostles in Rome. We know nothing of their suffering or why they were buried together

Gospel Reading

John 14 : 15-21

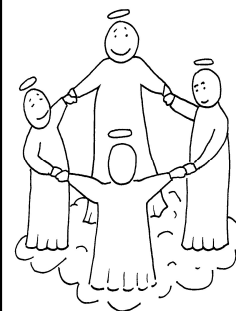
Today the Paraclete is promised. Jesus has promised to answer all prayer (vv.13-14) and explains that it is to glorify his Father that he will answer prayer. "Through Christ Our Lord" becomes the perfect expression of the prayer of petition, and the Lord has promised to answer.

But the clear condition is one of love: we ask only if we love, and we love only if we keep Jesus' commandments. This is not a new Moses, who gave the Law of God to Israel: it is the divine voice, claiming obedience to his own commandments - which means, supremely, the new commandment of love given a few moments earlier in 13:34.

The prayer of Jesus precedes our prayer, and Jesus is going to ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit who will be Paraclete, Advocate, Protector, Support - the Spirit of Truth to guide them always.

In verse 18 Jesus promises to return and we remember his assurance in Matthew 28:20 that he would be with them always, to the end of time. He seems to be talking about the understanding that they will live after his resurrection when all that he came to earth for will be clear to them. Jude (v.22) expresses the disciple's bewilderment: they do not understand. We perceive that "understanding" becomes a consequence of belief in the resurrection.

Wisdom from the Saints



"Pray for me
and I shall
for you
that we may
merrily meet
in heaven"

St Thomas More

This week I shall . . .

take inspiration from
the lives and sufferings
of the Church's Martyrs