



THE LORD'S DAY

7th 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 1 : 12-14

Jesus' final ascension has just happened at the Mount of Olives, near the Garden of Gethsemane - a powerful reminder of his agony before the wonder of new life. Yet Luke tells us in his Gospel of an ascension on the evening of the day of Resurrection (24:50-53) which took place at Bethany, a couple of miles from Jerusalem. We accept that there were "descents" and "ascensions" in each of Jesus' resurrection appearances - where was he if not with his Father? This account in Acts is of the final ascension.

Luke repeats the names of the apostles (no Judas) that he gave in chapter 6 of his Gospel. As we read we ask about Thaddeus, Nathanael, Levi, Lebbaeus, and wonder if anyone could name the twelve apostles with confidence? We doubt it.

Verse 14 sees the community at prayer. Here is the inner group of Jesus' followers, the ones most fully involved in his work. (We recognise friends such as Joseph, Nicodemus, Martha and Mary and their brother Simon Lazarus, as a wider circle belonging to Jesus in friendship.) The inner group is threefold: the apostles (named), Mary and women from Galilee, his family. They become a community of prayer. In verse 15 we learn of the greater community of 120, a neatly symbolic number (12x10) who meet as a governing body. They listen to a puzzling speech by Simon Peter.

FOLLOWING JESUS

Those close to Jesus pray;
Those belonging to Jesus, suffer;
Those who believe, witness.

This week I shall . . .
re-read today's Gospel

Second Reading

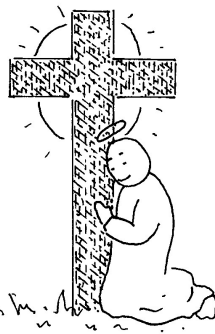
1 Peter 4 : 13-16

Peter has been encouraging the Christian community not to be afraid. Jesus suffered but attained his Father's glory: if we suffer it will be to share that same glory. In 4:18 Peter explains that Jesus suffered the fullness of death by going into the darkness of Sheol so that he could preach to the dead and give them the message of salvation that he has now brought to the world.

In knowing the fullness of death Jesus takes away its fear for us. Peter says we are now in the final age, awaiting the fullness of Christ's revelation - and if we are asked to suffer for Christ's sake we shall be all the better prepared for the joy of resurrection.

Suffering will come from those who mock and insult us for following Christ. They recognise the Spirit of Christ living within us - their very insults confirm the truth. If we suffer for being Christians then we can rejoice. No one can rejoice at being punished for being a thief or murderer, but we can rejoice in suffering being Christians: Jesus suffered, condemned as a criminal, seemingly, but really because he was unbearably good. If we share his suffering for being good, we are truly his followers.

Wisdom from the Saints



"If God is slow
in answering
your prayer,
don't be upset,
for you
are not wiser
than God"

Abraham of Nathpar

People of God

The boy was born addicted, his mother a drug addict. He didn't have a chance. The habit held her and the drugs world was the one he grew up in. At school he was tough and admired - the world he knew was harder than anything the other boys knew. As a teenager he was still only an addict, no pusher and no dealer, but hard. He met a girl who brought him into the love of her family home. It was a form of redemption by love. He began to accept help, saw ideals in life, and new possibilities. For over a year he tried, but fell back. He is still there. But his suffering had opened the family to the suffering of other families, and those families began to help each other. Support for those lonely and rejected families has continued to grow. Out of the boy's suffering others have found help. If only they could embrace him again . . .

Gospel Reading

John 17 : 1-11

Today's Gospel reading is called "The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus". It is wonderful. In chapters 14-16 Jesus has been speaking directly to his disciples, occasionally in dialogue with him, in what we call the "Farewell Discourse", but now, in chapter 17, he turns from them to his Father and they hear the intimacy of divine colloquy (conversation, dialogue). We hear Jesus' voice and recognise his Father is listening and wonder - if the Father spoke would it be in a similar manner?

The Gospel recounts Jesus' spending long periods of prayer with his Father, especially early morning and at night, but little detail is given. We hear Jesus in short prayers "I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth" (Matthew 11:25-27) and the agony in the Garden (Mark 14:36): but in John 17:1-26 we listen to the fullness of Jesus' prayer for the only time . . .

The prayer has four themes: Jesus' offering himself to the Father (vv.1-5), expressing concern for the disciples after his leaving them (vv.6-19), for the world who will come to know his message through the apostles' preaching, and the eternal life to be shared by all who believe.

In verse 5 we glimpse the life of Jesus as Son before time began. Jesus has revealed the name of the Father (v.6), and we wonder what his name is? Jesus' wants the Father to glorify him (v.5) - yet his work seems hardly to have started! Jesus' ministry very short but is already complete. "With the Lord, a day is as a thousand years, a thousands years are as a day" - we measure time by eternity . . . God's will is accomplished in love, not in time. The disciples must take this message (v.11) now that Jesus has completed his ministry.

Questions of Faith

Prayer. Today's Gospel reading is the most beautiful example in the whole of the Bible. It is divine. Jesus speaks to the Father and the Father's silence is full of listening love. I must learn to pray and listen.