



THE LORD'S DAY

1st Sunday of Lent (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

Genesis 2 : 7-9, 3 : 1-7

This is a second account of the Creation, a simpler story than the poem in chapter 1. The waters are beneath the earth and rise to irrigate it, but there is no-one to till the soil. The Lord creates a man (adam) from the soil (adamah) and blesses him with the breath of life.

The man becomes the gardener in Eden and watches the beauty of plant life growing in the rich soil from which he was made. Two trees (rich in symbolism) are in the centre of the garden: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. The tree of life becomes a forbidden tree only in chapter 3 (vv.22-24) but the tree of knowledge is forbidden at the very beginning of the story (2:16-17).

The lesson seems to be that life is for the man on condition he does not choose to know evil.

The serpent is hostile to God and represents power and cleverness. Its simple question seems to seek understanding and the woman answers innocently: but the serpent traps her into believing she can become immortal by knowing good and evil. The man seems to have been listening (v.6); he eats and they are surprised, shocked and shamed by new understanding. They hide.

JESUS REDEEMS US

The man and woman fail;
We all, in our turn, fail;
Jesus does not fail.

*This week I shall ...rejoice
that all sinners are redeemed.*

Second Reading

Romans 5 : 12-19

Paul is vividly aware of sin and mortality but, living his faith in Jesus, he knows a redemption won for the whole world. By its sinfulness the world has brought death upon itself, but immortality is the gift that God intends for the human race: and that gift comes through Christ Jesus.

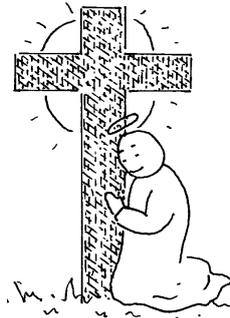
Through one man sin came into the world and therefore there was a first sin in the history of the human race. Then, everyone sins and thus everyone commits a first sin. Those personal original sins of the human race link back to the first/original sin of the human race. We are united in our sinfulness and in our needing to be redeemed.

We are all guilty of our own original sins ("all have sinned", v.12) but we are not guilty of the original sin in the human story. That was the guilt of the one who committed it, bringing sin into God's good world. It is only our own sin and sins of which we are guilty. Paul contrasts Adam (sin beginning) and Christ (redemption bringing). By our sinfulness we belong to Adam (the human race) and by our faith we belong to Christ (the redeemed).

Wisdom from the Saints

"The Cross
is God
at work"

Paul Claudel



Gospel Reading

Matthew 4 : 1-11

Jesus is about to begin his ministry. He prepares himself during a period of forty days in the wilderness - an image of Israel's forty years in the wilderness, of Elijah's forty days journey to the Mountain of God (Horeb/Sinai) where the Commandments were given to Moses. Israel failed God by idolatry, political alliances and grumbling about food and water.

Jesus does not fail. He is willing to be hungry rather than grumble against God. Bread alone is not enough for life - we live by the truth of the word of God. Jesus is not willing to presume on his Father's care of him by acting rashly and will not claim a miracle by right of divine protection. He is not like the Hebrews who challenged God and Moses in the wilderness years, acting defiantly. He knows the goodness of God and is obedient to that goodness.

The offer to control and rule the world by power and political alliances, rather than by accepting God's providence in ruling one's life, Jesus rejects. He does not want power, but the love and justice of God.

Israel failed forty years in the desert, Jesus triumphed in his forty days.

Questions of Faith

Redemption is God's saving the human race through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Jesus delivered the human race from sin and gave promise of new life: "I came that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Early Fathers of the Church spoke about the human race being enslaved by Satan and said that the death of Jesus was a price paid to release us from Satan's power. Later writers, like Anselm, spoke about Jesus' life and death "satisfying" God because the human race fully atoned for its sinfulness by the perfect life and death of Jesus. Jesus, Saviour and Redeemer, makes us his brothers and sisters in the Redemption. The whole world is redeemed.

People of God

Ireneus, Duns Scotus, Teilhard de Chardin are three writers over the Christian centuries who held a vision of Creation and Incarnation as belonging together. They wrote about the Incarnation as the supreme moment of God's creative plan: in Jesus the human and divine, the finite and infinite, the temporal and eternal, meet. God's creation reached its perfection in the wonderful person of Jesus - and therefore his coming (Incarnation) was always a part of the divine plan. Other writers, like **Athanasius** and **Thomas Aquinas**, speak about Jesus' coming in order to redeem the human race from sin, suggesting that if there had been no sin there would have been no Incarnation. But the first writers would claim that evil could not change God's plan: the Incarnation was always intended to complete Creation: Redemption is a consequence of Incarnation, not its purpose.