



THE LORD'S DAY

Feast of the Assumption

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

Apocalypse 11:19, 12:1-6,10

The book was written by John of Patmos in the final years of the 1st century AD. He wrote to encourage Christians suffering a world-wide Roman persecution under the Emperor Domitian, who was the first to enforce the cult of emperor worship. The evil power of Rome becomes the symbol of the evil in our world and John wants his readers to believe that the power of God will prevail now just as it always has since Creation's first evil rebellion.

That rebellion is in the verses omitted from today's reading (vv 7-9), yet how powerful those three verses have been in Christian imagination over the centuries! To tell people that these few lines are *all* we have of a rebellion by Lucifer/Satan and his angels startles them. The Old Testament says nothing of Satan's rebellion.

The woman of today's reading is, first, Israel, longing to give birth to the Messiah; then she becomes images of the Church giving Christ to the world, and of Our Lady giving birth to Jesus. The Dragon is the power of 1st century Rome, the horns are the Roman emperors and the crowns are the rulers of the conquered kingdoms.

The woman escapes to the desert for 42 months (3½ years) - we remember Israel's forty years in the desert - but there is rejoicing that the power of evil is broken by the birth of a child to rule the nations.

*This week I shall . . .
pray the 4th Glorious Mystery*

Wisdom from the Saints



"There is no better way to obtain graces from God than to seek them through Mary. Her divine son can refuse her nothing"

St. Philip Neri

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 15 : 20-26

First fruits were brought to the Temple (the first sheaves of the harvest) on the first day after the Passover celebrations, representing the complete harvest received gratefully from God and now offered back in thanksgiving.

Thus Christ's resurrection, the first fruits, offers to God the resurrection of the whole human race. Here is the central feature of Paul's preaching: if Christ is not raised from the dead then our faith in him is foolishness.

Today's reading treats death as the consequence of sin. Paul says that sin comes into God's good world through humankind, and we all share the consequent death: but Christ overcame death by rising from the dead ("when he was raised from the dead") and we conquer death by rising with Christ to new life.

The second coming of Christ will complete the victory over sin and death, his kingdom will then be fulfilled and he will hand over the kingdom to his Father. There are, thus, two kingdoms - the now and the eternal. Paul is swept along by the power of his thought and images of Old Testament teaching and Ancient World myths. (Read on to verse 38 . . .)

SALVATION HISTORY

Israel (Messiah) and Church (Saviour)
Old (sin/death) and New (Resurrection)
Elizabeth (Israel) and Mary (Church)

People of God

Sarah was barren, longed for a child. Her son, Isaac ("laughter"), was born, and inherited the promise from Abraham.

Rachel longed for a child and finally gave birth to Joseph who saved Israel and his sons in time of famine.

Hannah pleaded with God for a son and gave birth to Samuel, who became the great prophet of God's people.

The Wife of Manoah had no child, but was promised one who would save God's people. She gave birth to Samson.

Elizabeth waited many years for her son, John. He prepared the way of the Lord.

The Woman Israel awaited the Messiah . . .

Gospel Reading

Luke 1: 39-56

Mary has been invited to be the mother of the Messiah/Saviour (vv 26-38). She learns that her distant cousin, Elizabeth, is six months pregnant after many barren years. This is not family news, it is a revelation from God. How would Mary share that revelation, explain it, justify her wanting to travel five or six dangerous days to visit Elizabeth, leaving her parents and Joseph wondering at home? Did she share her secret with them?

Mary completes the difficult journey. She seems to be alone. Elizabeth and her womb-child respond to Mary's greeting and Elizabeth already knows (had this been revealed to her?) that Mary is with child - and even knows who the child is.

The Magnificat carries echoes of many Old Testament books and stories, the psalms, the prophets, the women Hannah and Judith. But whose is the hymn? Some manuscripts say it was Elizabeth's, most say Mary's - but it is to the "Woman Israel" that the words best belong - and Mary and Elizabeth both symbolise Israel: Elizabeth, the barren woman in waiting and Mary the joyful almah (young woman) with child.

Questions of Faith

"Rising, raised, from the dead"

The resurrection stories in Matthew, Mark and Luke say that Jesus rose from the dead. John refers to Jesus as "being alive" without direct reference to a rising or being raised.

St. Paul (1 Corinthians 15 : 4,13,20 and elsewhere) refers to Jesus' being raised from the dead; and yet in 1 Thessalonians 4:14 he speaks of Jesus "rising from the dead".

If Jesus rises, it is by his own power; if he is raised, it is by his Father's power. The fascinating question relates to Jesus' "kenosis", his self-emptying, by which he ceased to be divine in order to be fully human - and therefore the divine in Jesus was always his Father's action ("I can do nothing by myself" John 5:30 ff). Thus we ponder: Jesus rose, was raised, from the dead . . .