



THE LORD'S DAY

2nd Sunday of 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

Isaiah 49 : 3, 5-6

We are in the second part of the book of Isaiah, the Book of Consolation which was written in the middle of the 6th century BC during the Babylonian exile. Its purpose was to encourage the people with new hope in God's unending love - and to introduce the Suffering Servant who would bring justice and peace to Israel and to the world.

Today's reading is the second song of the Servant and speaks what Jeremiah and the psalmist also knew: God's love for the child in the womb. The Servant calls to the remotest islands of the world to hear his message - it is a universal message! The suffering of the Servant, patiently borne, is blessed in God's loving gaze (v.4) who then asks the Servant to call Israel back to faithfulness (v.5) and then go to the whole world to bring light and salvation.

It is a wonderful song and we hear the life and death of Jesus in every line. The author is inspired, beyond his present time and suffering, to understand an eternal gaze of God upon the temporal things of earth - and to see that true faith will judge by eternity rather than by time. The Servant's call is for an eternal understanding . . .

GOD'S WORD IN HUMAN VOICES
Glimpsing eternity;
Healing the community;
Preparing the Lord's way.

This week I shall . . .
ponder eternal life and baptism

People of God

The little girl in class 7 The teacher had invited Father into her classroom. She was going to speak about baptism and would value his contribution. She asked the class what water meant to them. The little girl said "Life". The teacher said "Very good, but what else can it mean?" "Washing" said someone, and the teacher was pleased. "Baptism washes or cleanses us from sin," she said. The first little girl muttered "Water is much more important in giving life than in washing." Father caught the mutter and later, when he spoke, he drew the teacher's lesson and the girl's insight together, linking the baptism of John (forgiveness) and the baptism of Jesus (new life). The class understood. Then a new question - "Why baptism?" and confronted the class with a question that bewildered them. Would people who were not baptised go to heaven? The class thought the answer was obvious - they believed in a God of love for all the world: God would never refuse heaven . . . Why baptism?

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1 : 1-3

There has been trouble in Corinth. Paul was the first Christian missionary to visit there (50-52 AD) and he established a community. We read of the mission in Acts (18:1-18) and his work as a tent maker, alongside Aquila and Priscilla with whom he also lodged. He aroused anger in his fellow Jews for preaching Christ but won many converts amongst the pagans.

Now Paul writes from Ephesus (57 AD) to answer questions on Church belief and morality brought him by a delegation from Corinth, but also to challenge the scandal and divisions in the community.

Today's reading is Paul's polite general greeting to the community, wishing them peace and blessing and calling them the holy ones of Christ. It is the ideal he had offered in his earlier mission and in verses 4-9 he encourages them to be faithful to the witness he had borne and that they had begun to give to others.

Thanksgiving and encouragement mark the opening of this letter, but a storm is about to break.

Wisdom from the Saints



"The water of baptism reveals new life"
Nicolas Cabasilas

Gospel Reading

John 1: 29-34

Matthew, Mark and Luke tell of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. They give puzzlingly different accounts - the Father's voice is heard as thunder or words, addressing Jesus or the bystanders - and today's reading only adds to our questions.

There is no mention of Jesus' being baptised and the narrative is all in John's words. He did not know Jesus (his cousin!) but he did know he was sent to baptise with water to prepare the way for the one who would baptise with the Holy Spirit. This Gospel account does not mention a baptism of repentance, as the others do.

John says he saw the Spirit come down on Jesus and thus knew he would be the one to baptise with the Spirit. There is no voice from Heaven - "This is my Son," "You are my Son" as in the other accounts - but John says he was to know the chosen one of God by seeing the Spirit resting on him. It was a private revelation to the Baptist - yet in the other Gospel accounts it seems to be a revelation to Jesus or/and to the bystanders.

Why did John the Baptist not know his cousin? Why was there no preparation together for their mission and ministries?

Questions of Faith

Baptism is the sacrament by which we become members of Christ and his community. The Greek "baptein" means to immerse and is the base for our "baptism". In Mark (10:38-9) Jesus and his disciples are baptised with suffering - so the word might also suggest "being overwhelmed". In the Book of Kings (2 K:5,14) we read of Naaman's immersing himself seven times in the River Jordan - later seen by the Fathers of the Church as a form of baptism. John the Baptist's baptism was one of cleansing, in line with other Jewish ritual ceremonies, but he spoke of preparing the way for a new baptism - "with the Holy Spirit and with fire". Jesus brings the promise of eternal life with his baptism.