



THE LORD'S DAY

4th Sunday of Year B

The Watermead Apostolate offers this weekly newsletter as a helpful guide and background to the readings used at our Catholic Mass each Sunday. Watermead began in 1992 as a voice for people who wish to share understanding of living their faith through their various God-given gifts and talents. We frame these gifts by publishing them as books, cards and resources - and we record and publish the music. We also arrange retreats and pilgrimages.

For information about the work of our apostolate, to download our resources or to offer newsletter contributions, do feel welcome to contact us at:

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First Reading

Deuteronomy 18 : 15-20

"Deuteronomy" means "a second telling" and the book imagines Moses' gathering the people around him before he dies, in order to remind them of God's blessings since their leaving the slavery of Egypt and being given the Law by which they became the people of God. Throughout the book there is a tone of sadness - it is Moses' last address to the people: all their memories are included in the giving of the law and the details of their desert journey.

Chapters 16 and 17 have told of Passover, the days of Unleavened Bread and other feasts. The structures of justice have been established throughout the tribes, and in chapter 18 the importance of prophets and priests is outlined. The tribe of Levi is the priestly tribe and all are priests (v.1) though primacy goes to the line of Aaron, Moses' brother. The tribe of Levi will also have no land or inheritance, as the other tribes shall have, but will be dependent on the support of the other tribes. Their ministry in the service of God will earn them their support.

Israel is warned against sharing the abominable practices of the peoples in the land they are about to conquer, and then comes today's reading in which the voice of prophecy is praised. The Lord will make the divine will known through the voice of the true prophet.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 7 : 32-35

Paul is dealing with questions put to him by the people of Corinth (7:1), especially relating to sex and marriage. It is clear that his first advice is for Christians to remain unmarried (v.7). He is aware of the consequence - that within a generation the Christian community, if not the whole world, would cease to exist! But Paul considers that he is living in the final age and his vision is of a world dedicated to waiting for Jesus' second coming.

For widows and widowers, and the unmarried, he advises marriage if the pain of sexual longing is too great (v.9). Paul says that his advice comes from him and not from the Lord. On these most essential issues - marriage and sexual love, family and generations - only once does Paul refer to Jesus' teachings (vv.10-11). The rest of chapter 7 is Paul's own thought and teaching.

Today's reading counsels celibacy rather than marriage. For Paul, marriage is a consequence of natural urges and thus difficult to resist. There is no beauty in this understanding, no romance: the control of the body and a settled society of arranged marriages is as far as Paul seems to see. He considers the developing of a good marriage would be a distraction from prayer and preparing for the Lord's coming. Evidently, he considers married love to be a poor preparation for eternal life

Gospel Reading

Mark 1 : 21-28

Mark's Gospel moves quickly. Chapter 1 has the preaching and baptising by John the Baptist, Jesus' baptism, Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, the arrest of John, Jesus' beginning his preaching ministry and the call of the first apostles - all in twenty verses!

Today's reading brings us to Capernaum which, we know from Matthew, Jesus made his home after returning to Galilee from being baptised by John. The people welcome Jesus as an impressive speaker in the synagogue - in contrast to the people of Nazareth who belittle him when he later comes to them with his new-found confidence and ministry.

The evil spirits recognise who Jesus is (v.21) in this first meeting and there is challenge between them. Jesus becomes their adversary, their "satan", just as Jesus calls Peter his "satan" when Peter disagrees with him (Matthew 16:25).

It is worth noting that the first words the spirits speak to Jesus are the same words that Jesus says to Mary when she approaches him at the wedding feast at Cana. Translators may interpret as they choose (we are always at the mercy of translators when we do not know original languages), but we must ask why demons ask Jesus what Jesus asks Mary. The answer is fascinating see below.

People of God

The Elderly Couple. We watched them grow old suddenly. Their daughter died and the light went out of their lives. Their son had never been close to them and when their need became greater for their children's affection he was a disappointment - having no time for their slow pace of life and the little world in which they lived. They became more lonely as months went by. Only going to mass on Sundays, and occasionally in the week, gave her the chance to chat and smile and she tried to bring something of that home.

Children do not understand, as the years go by, the loneliness in parents who long to be shown affection . . .

TEMPTING GOD

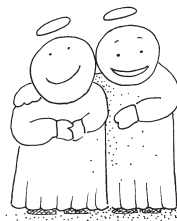
God has been good, says Moses;
The Lord comes soon, says Paul;
Evil is envious of good.

*This week I shall . . .
praise the Lord's goodness*

**Wisdom
from the
Saints**

"Old age comes
from God"

Teilhard de Chardin



Questions of Faith

"What to me and to you?" These are the words spoken to Jesus by the evil spirits in today's Gospel. The phrase occurs a number of times in the Old and New Testaments and is difficult to translate. What the phrase seems to express is surprise or dismay, being aware of awkwardness or division or even antagonism. Thus, for example, at Cana, Jesus uses the phrase to his mother to assure her that she can approach him with confidence. Today, the phrase expresses the demons' dismay at the power of good in Jesus.