



THE LORD'S DAY

5th Sunday of Lent (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

Jeremiah 31 : 31-34

The years 640-580 B.C. are the best documented of Israel's long history. Jeremiah belongs to the sadness, unfaithfulness and defeat of those years - a voice crying out on God's behalf, pleading for belief and trust in God rather than in temporary political alliances.

The Prophet has just been speaking about God as a farmer planting seed and rearing cattle, and of a new understanding of judgment - that the people will be judged as individuals (the children will not suffer for the father's sins); and then comes this extraordinary passage: a New Covenant. There will be no need for circumcision, the Law, the Temple, priest or prophet, because God will speak directly to the human heart where the law of love is written.

Everyone will be forgiven personally, will know God and be offered personal forgiveness.

Second Reading

Hebrews 5 : 7-9

The Letter to the Hebrews was written towards the end of the first century by someone fearful for Jews wanting to return to Judaism. He wants to show that Christ Jesus has fulfilled all that the Old Testament was hoping for and is the long-awaited Messiah - the final revelation of God's love.

Today's reading takes a look at the personal and emotional life of Jesus, a life inspired by prayer. We remember mornings and evenings when Jesus went quietly to pray alone. We remember his suffering tears in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Passion and Death and his weeping over Jerusalem. There were tears at the death of Lazarus, there was anger at the money-changers in the Temple, there was affection for Martha and Mary.

In his humanity Jesus became an example and inspiration in whom we can believe.

Gospel Reading

John 12 : 20-33

This passage follows Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. His hour has come, and we remember the Wedding Feast at Cana when he assured Mary "My hour has not yet come," when he answered her request.

Jesus' lyrical words remind us of the Agony in the Garden - the prayer to the Father, acceptance of death, comfort given from heaven when the Father speaks.

The Greeks seeking to speak to him symbolise the Gentile world ready to share his redemptive death and life-giving teaching. Philip and Andrew came from Bethsaida, a town where Jews and Gentiles lived easily together.

Disciples (servants) are invited to share Jesus' suffering so that they can share his glory. Because of Jesus we, too, can hear God's voice. When Jesus is lifted up from the earth (Crucifixion and Ascension) he draws the whole world to himself. We die and ascend in union with him.

Wisdom from the Saints



"I look forward to being in heaven, rejoicing with the angels"

St. Dorothy

THE HUMAN JOURNEY

is an individual one,
a freely chosen following of Christ.
We are aware of the influence of
loved ones in our lives - but, finally,
we must accept our own responsibility
in personal choices and failures.

This week I shall . . .

honestly write down my sins and
failures, and accept God's forgiveness.

Questions of Faith

If God made us for heaven, why
are we sinners on earth first?
Why couldn't we go straight to
heaven?

We don't know the answer, only the challenge of the question. We long to be perfect, for others to be without fault, to live an ideal life, but we are very aware of our sins and failures ~ and even more of the failures of others!.

St. Paul wondered, too, and he writes that he begged God to free him from his imperfections, but received the answer that God's grace was sufficient for him. He was satisfied and even explained that our sins awaken a need for God ~ implying that if we were always good we might become self-sufficient and proud.

To be kind, to learn love and forgiveness, to be patient, are the beginnings of an answer: somehow we grow into the fullness of love ~ which is heaven.

People of God

St. Romuald was overwhelmed with horror when his father killed a relative in a duel, following a dispute about land. The son spent forty days at prayer in a monastery - and then discovered his own vocation to religion. He lived as a hermit. Over time, others followed him which led to the foundation of many monasteries. The best known one was Camaldoli, and it was from that monastery that the brethren took their name - Camaldolese.

The life of St. Romuald teaches us that we may find good everywhere, even in the most unlikely occasions. His father's crime led him to discover his own vocation and, years later, the bad behaviour of some of his fellow monks caused him to leave them and live a solitary life. As a young man he had been troubled by temptations of the flesh and he would distract himself by going out hunting - and thus discovered a love for solitude that developed fully into the love of a hermit's life that became his way as a mature man.

St. Augustine writes "We may learn from our failures, and become more humble, careful and sincere," and St. Paul in his letter to the Romans writes that to those that love God all things may bring about good. St. Romuald learned from his own mistakes and from the mistakes of others to see God more clearly.