



THE LORD'S DAY

28th Sunday of Year C

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

2 Kings 5 : 14-17

We are in the middle of the 9th century BC. Jehoram is king in Israel and Elisha is the prophet. Elisha has worked miracles (see chapter 4) and his fame has spread.

The Arameans (today's Syria) had invaded Northern Israel and taken captives. A slave girl serving Naaman's wife speaks of Elisha to her mistress and says that the prophet would cure Naaman's leprosy.

Naaman is the army commander and the Aramean king willingly gives him permission to go to Samaria to seek a cure. King Jehoram is disturbed at the request which he considers impossible to fulfil, but Elisha assures him that, with God's help, there will be a cure.

Naaman is angry at the prophet's simple bidding - to bathe seven times in the River Jordan, and refuses; but his servants remind him that he would have willingly accepted difficult conditions - so why not accept simple ones? Naaman concurs.

Today's reading now begins. Naaman immerses himself in the Jordan seven times and is cured: God has fulfilled the prophet's word. Naaman is overwhelmed, believes in the Lord as God of all the earth, offers Elisha whatever gift he would choose and then asks a favour - to take away earth enough for an altar so that he might offer sacrifice to the God of Israel on holy land.

FAITH RULES

Faith asks for simplicity;
Faith requires strength and courage;
Faith mightn't include gratitude.

Second Reading

2 Timothy 2 : 8-13

Paul has been encouraging Timothy to accept the burden of office with faith and strength. Now, in chapter 2, Timothy is urged to wisely instruct and delegate so that the faith may be passed on. Paul points to soldiers, athletes and farmers as examples of dedicated men whom Timothy can look to for inspiration.

A bishop, too, must focus on responsibilities. Paul offers himself as an example of a believer willing to suffer for his faith in the resurrection of Christ. Paul is being treated as a criminal, but God's news can never be imprisoned and will always be free! That freedom inspires Paul to bear his sufferings for the sake of others.

Then comes part of a hymn (vv 11-13). Line by line there are neat balances of ideas, each line complete in its two halves; but notice that 12b and 13a seem to disagree and raise the question: would Christ disown us?

Wisdom from the Saints



"Suddenly
it is
simple.
Gratitude
says
it all"

Dom David
(Monk)

This week I shall . . .
say "thank you" every day.

Gospel Reading

Luke 17 : 11-19

Only Luke tells this story. Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem, travelling along the border between Galilee and Samaria. He is going east instead of south! No, he is being careful. Jews avoided travelling through Samaria, so would cross the River Jordan in Galilee, go down the far side, and cross into Judea near Jericho. Tension was always present between Jew and Samaritan. We think of "peace-lines" in today's world and of indirect journeys such as Jesus takes in today's Gospel.

The lepers know him, call him by name and title. Had they seen him on previous journeys, in happier times before being afflicted by leprosy? In asking for mercy they risk breaking the code of leprosy - no contact. They should have called out "Unclean" but they call "Mercy".

The cure is surprising and quick, almost too easy. The Samaritan (how many of the ten were Samaritans?) returns to thank "Jesus, Master". Jesus expresses his disappointment: the foreigner recognises God's working through Jesus, the Jews do not.

Faith brings about the cures - "Your faith has cured you". All the lepers had faith, but only one had gratitude. Sounds familiar?

Questions of Faith

The Biblical Seven

Elisha asks Naaman to bathe seven times in the Jordan. In the previous chapter he had brought a boy back to life - the boy sneezed seven times as a celebration that the breath of life was in his nostrils again (remember the story in "Genesis" of God's breathing the life into the body of clay). Creation took seven days, so did the Flood. The walls of Jericho fell after seven days. The Gospel miracle of the feeding plays on the number seven - five loaves and two fish, seven loaves. The Church chose seven deacons. Try to count the sevens in the Book of Revelation: churches, lamps, stars, trumpets, etc.

People of God

Tommy has been very ill for a little while now. He was always regular at mass, but not at Holy Communion. He felt unworthy to receive because he thought his faith was not good or strong enough. He admitted as much when the illness began. The priest called, was made welcome but there was no Holy Communion because Tommy explained how he had felt for many years. Father did not press it - this was God's time, not human time, and he knew that when the time was right Tommy would ask for Communion. The request for anointing came first, and *then* Father suggested Communion also. Tommy agreed, and the relationship with God was fully re-established. Twice a week, now, Tommy receives Holy Communion and with much gratitude. "These are the best moments of the week," he says. How he must understand the Samaritan leper's gratitude . . .