



THE LORD'S DAY

13th 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

2 Kings 4 : 8-11, 14-16

We are in the middle of the 9th century BC. Elisha has followed Elijah as God's prophet in Israel. He, too, is blessed with the power of miracle, and chapter 4 tells of four of those miracles: Elisha multiplies oil for a poor widow so that she can pay her debts and avoid being enslaved (vv.1-7); he purifies a pot of poisoned soup (vv.38-41); he multiplies barley loaves to provide for a great number of men (St. John's Gospel tells of the boy having five barley loaves at Jesus' feeding of the 5,000); and brings a young boy to life (vv.18-37) - the child of today's reading.

Shunem was in the north of the country, Galilee, in the land of the tribe of Issachar, not far from Mount Tabor. We discover that Elisha dwelt near Mount Carmel, on the coastline of the Great Sea, and we puzzle at his regular journey from Mount Carmel to the interior of the country.

The Shunemite woman is wealthy but childless (in contrast to the poor widow of verses 1-7: Elisha's love is for everyone - just like God's). She is kind, and so does Elisha wish to be in return. The story is of goodness inspiring further goodness.

Second Reading

Romans 6 : 3-4, 8-11

Baptism is death and resurrection. Paul has been writing about faith in Christ Jesus bringing salvation to the whole world, of Abraham's being the father in faith for the whole human race, and contrasts the natural life (Adam) with the supernatural life (Christ).

Chapter 5 ends with the contrast between *the law*, which condemns us because of our failings, and *grace* which blesses and frees us. Paul recognises the implication of what he has said: the more we sin, the more grace will abound! The very sinfulness of the world only increases the power of redemption given us by Christ.

Chapter 6 begins to answer the new question. We do not remain in sin - we are cleansed of sin because it has died within us as a consequence of our baptism: Jesus' death redeems us and in our baptism we share his death. He was raised to life and so are we by sharing his life (See "Question of Faith").

Christ cannot die again so sin can have no influence to bring about his death: we have died to sin with him and live the new life of grace - alive in Christ.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 10 : 37-42

Chapter 10 is full of instruction for the apostles on their mission to the lost sheep of Israel (10:6). They are to preach, heal, give freely, untroubled about providing for themselves (vv.6-16). They will meet persecution and betrayal, just as Jesus had been prepared for (vv.17-25). The apostles must not expect to be treated differently from the way Jesus had been treated.

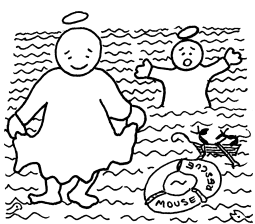
They are encouraged not to be afraid - they live in God's protective love. Death is not to be feared, especially death for God's sake, so they are to be faithful and unfearing (vv.24-33).

Then comes a change of emphasis. Jesus admits he will be the cause of family division when religious belief separates loved ones from each other.

It is not what we want to hear (vv.34-37), especially when, today, we see people acting "on principle" and not through love - throwing sons and daughters out of the home and family, refusing to attend baptisms, weddings and funerals in other places of worship, being ready to kill family affection in the name of God and Church. We see in today's Church divisions what the first Christian community saw, and this Gospel passage warns about.

Verses 40-42 come as quiet relief - acts of kindness in everyday life, after the thunder of threat of division and hatred.

Wisdom from the Saints



"The water of baptism drowns the old man and raises up the new"

Nicolas Cabasilas
(Greek mystical writer)

NEW LIFE

A child is born;
New life for God's children;
Christ's mission - new life.

This week I shall . . .
read the story of Elisha.

People of God

St Peter lived in Bethsaida in Galilee. He and his brother, Andrew, were friends of Jesus' cousins, James and John, and with them became the first of his disciples. He was chosen by Jesus to be the leader of the apostles, and immediately after Pentecost we see him take initiatives: filling the vacancy left by Judas, admitting thousands into the Church, bringing the Gospel to the Gentile, Cornelius. It is probable that he founded the Church at Antioch and sent Mark to do the same at Alexandria. Eventually he came to Rome, was martyred and buried there during the persecution of Nero.

St Paul was born at Tarsus in Asia Minor of Jewish parents. He studied in Jerusalem, and one of his teachers was Gamaliel - the wise man who warned the Sanhedrin against persecuting the Christians for fear they would be offending God. Paul persecuted the Christians until "Jesus, whom you are persecuting" called him in a remarkable moment on the road to Damascus. Paul understood his mission was to the Gentiles and after a long period of prayerful preparation he began his missionary journeys. He, also, died a martyr in Rome during Nero's persecution, we believe.

Questions of Faith

Baptism. Paul sees in the waters of baptism a tomb in which the Christian is placed (baptism by immersion was their way) and, then, coming out of the water, the Christian rises to a new life. It is a powerful interpretation of a simple ceremony, but we understand Paul's meaning: baptism looks like death and resurrection - and, sacramentally, it is! As Paul develops this theme we see the old life (pre-baptism) die and the new life in Christ greeted with joy. That is Paul's message - baptism is death and resurrection . . .