



THE LORD'S DAY

19th 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

1 Kings 19 : 9, 11-13

Read chapter 18 in preparation for today's reading. You will like the courage, loyalty and moral sense of Obadiah, as he puts his dilemma before Elijah. You will be fascinated by the ferocious nature of the story of the sacrifice on Mount Carmel and sickened by Elijah's personal killing of the prophets of Baal.

Thus you will not be surprised at the anger of Ahab and Jezebel with which chapter 19 opens. The powerful queen wants to kill Elijah for killing her prophets - it was she who had led Ahab the King away from the worship of God (1 Kings 16:29-34). Elijah flees for his life, wants to die, is nourished by food and drink brought by the Angel of the Lord (God appearing in human form), and then follows the angel's bidding that he walk to Mount Horeb/Sinai, the mountain of God.

The symbolism is powerful - forty days (Elijah), forty years (Moses), food and drink in the wilderness (Elijah), manna and water in the desert (Moses), the mountain of the Law (Moses) as the place for the Lord to reveal his love (Elijah). The theophany (storm) manifests a God whose immensity is overwhelming, but the strong soft voice and the gentle breeze are the God worshipped by Israel.

Questions of Faith

Theophany is the manifestation or revealing of God.

In the Old Testament God is the Cloud (on Mount Sinai and the Law, Tent of Meeting, Solomon's Temple), the Storm, the Thunder and Lightning. When Elijah comes to Mount Sinai/Horeb he expects God in the wind, earthquake and fire - but God is in the gentle breeze. "Theophany" is the drama of God's communicating with his the people.

The New Testament affirms that Jesus is the perfect manifestation of God - at his Baptism, the Transfiguration and Ascension.

Elijah and the disciples share theophany in today's readings.

Second Reading

Romans 9 : 1-5

This is a new moment in Paul's letter. Chapter 8 has been about the Christian life, awareness of being children of God, rejoicing in God's glory. Paul's life as a Christian seems to be one of fulfilment, but it isn't. He is heart-broken. He is of Israel and he longs to share his Christian belief within the people of Israel. Just as Christ died for us so Paul would die for Israel if it would serve any purpose.

He outlines the blessings he shared with his people - Law, ministry, promises - and in conscience can say he would die for Israel, his own flesh and blood.

The chapter develops into analysis of God's promises that will never be revoked, of God's justice - not always apparent (vv.9-21) - and of human impudence that questions the goodness of God - the Lord is the potter, we are merely the clay. Pagans have not taken the place of Jews but have their own place. Paul longs for the older promises to Israel to be acknowledged.

COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Elijah in despair for Israel;

Paul in pain for Israel;

Disciples in fear for life.

People of God

Margaret Fishback Powers is the author of "Footprints", the poem that has touched the hearts and lives of so many people - and for years was attributed to the little church mouse named "Anonymous". The poem was originally called "I Had a Dream" and was written by Margaret during a disturbed night, remembering sad moments of life and knowing the Lord must have carried her through them. In writing the poem she felt she was free to love again, and could accept the proposal of marriage given her the previous day when she and Paul had looked at their own footprints in the sand and discussed how the Lord would carry them through life's difficulties. The poem was written in 1964, and has become known universally.

*This week I shall . . .
recall the Lord's carrying me.*

Gospel Reading

Matthew 14 : 22-33

St. Anne's-on-sea, Western-super-mare, Westcliff-on-sea, are not islands but towns on the sea-shore. Can today's "miracle" of walking on the water be interpreted similarly? Such a suggestion does not lessen the importance of the story but reads it as symbolising Jesus' powerful presence to his disciples in the storms of life, their acknowledgement of him as Son of God when they see him as he truly is, and, particularly, of Peter's need of reassurance that he can truly trust his Lord.

The story is also told in Mark, but we hear nothing of Peter nor of the disciples acknowledging Jesus as Son of God. Luke does not tell the story, but John does in a much shorter account. Mark is the only one to remark that the disciples did not understand because they had not seen what the miracle of the loaves had meant - their minds were closed.

To what should they have been opened? Matthew says they understood Jesus to be the Son of God (v.33) at the end of today's reading, but Mark says that they did not understand.

Some scholars suggest this is a post-resurrection story ("It is a ghost!") which is told here for dramatic purpose; others that it is an image of Moses' crossing the Sea of Reeds and having power over the water. Jesus is the new Moses, feeding the people in the desert and walking over the seabed.

The three versions in Mark, Matthew and John are not easy to understand. Is our best understanding of the passage simply "Jesus is with us in the storms of life"?

Wisdom from the Saints

"A living faith
is not
something
you have
to carry,
but something
that carries
you"

J.H. Oldham

