



THE LORD'S DAY

25th 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

Isaiah 55 : 6-9

You must read the whole of this beautiful short chapter. It is the final one of the Book of Consolation - the second part of the Book of Isaiah. The opening words are addressed to the "anawim", the poor, God's little ones. Food and drink will be provided for them - more than anything their wages could buy. The Lord will provide.

Further, beyond bodily nourishment they will be given the word of God - "Listen", the people are told, "and your soul will live". Food for body and mind will give encouragement for them to go to other nations and share with them the Lord's blessings. The Lord's blessing, they learn, is universal - not simply for Israel.

Suddenly (today's reading), the message becomes personal, addressed to the wicked man who must learn that God's love in nourishing mind and body includes even him. Forgiveness is promised (v.7)! The piously good are listening (v.8) and The Lord has words for them also: their thoughts against sinners are not God's thoughts - the ways of the Lord are not limited to narrow human thinking.

Verses 10-11 follow today's reading, the snow and the rain nourishing the earth. Is there a more beautiful passage in Scripture?

Second Reading

Philippians 1 : 20-24, 27

The Church at Philippi was the first one established in today's Europe. Its members were almost entirely Gentile and they were generous in financial support to Paul. The letter seems to have been written from Rome, perhaps from prison, about AD 62. It opens in Paul's usual way - greetings of prayer and thanksgiving. He is happy that God's grace has been guiding the community and he tells them he shares God's love for them.

Paul then tells them of his imprisonment (vv.13-14), of how it has given courage to others to preach the Lord Jesus, unafraid because Paul is unafraid; but he doubts the integrity of some who seem to be preachers for their own self-glorification. Surprisingly, he does not condemn such selfish preaching: so long as Christ is proclaimed, Paul is happy.

Now comes today's reading. Paul is caught between two loves: *love of* Christ with whom he would like to be - the life of the resurrection; and *love for* Christ, serving the communities of believers, strengthening their faith, giving them courage. We almost see Paul's smiling at his dilemma. The smile turns to gentle admonition for the Philippians to stay faithful.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 20 : 1-16

All casual labourers will understand the pain and joy in this parable. At dawn, men gather at the market place in hope of being given a day's work. The fit and strong would be the first chosen, and thus have the security of receiving a wage at the end of the day's work. The denarius was a fair wage for a day's work.

The vineyard owner finds other men idle at the third, sixth and ninth hours. They, too, after increasingly hopeless waiting, are offered work at a fair wage (no sum mentioned). No other employer has wanted them - or has only employed them for a few hours and then the men have returned to the market place.

The dialogue with the eleventh hour workers is strange. The owner knows they have been standing there all day, idle. Their pathetic reply is that no one has wanted them. We see them: the elderly, the weak, the long-term unemployed, the faces who don't fit, the inexperienced who don't know how to win attention or favour. They are the misfits. As yesterday, they are not wanted today for work.

Surprisingly, they are offered work - a little dignity with promise of a little wage to justify their being men who provide for their families. Minimal wage, maybe, but something.

They are wrong! The vineyard is the Lord's, and they are given a full day's wage, pay equal to the first employed labourers. The Lord pays according to human dignity, not according to the hours worked. Beautiful! There is only one wage - eternal life. The first labourers worked all day in the security of earning a full day's pay (believers who know that eternal life follows death), but the eleventh hour workers knew no security and felt hopeless. But they, too, receive eternal life! God has nothing else to give.

Wisdom from the Saints



"I can't believe in a God who only saves people who live in certain countries"

Robert Runcie (Archbishop of Canterbury)

GOD'S NOURISHING

God feeds the poor;
Paul serves the community;
The Lord gives eternal life to all.

This week I shall . . .

ponder wages and unemployment

People of God

Dinny was a dock labourer, and knew the pain of today's parable. When the ships were in, the work was good and so were the wages. When work was slack the system could be unjust. The men had to turn up and be registered ("receive the blob") as ready for work, but were allowed to go if there was no work. They had to return at mid-day and register again. A whole day could be lost, with nothing to do but being available - so they would earn a meagre minimum wage. If only a little work became available the gangers and foremen would choose their favourites for the work, or the men won their favour by buying them drinks in the idle time of waiting for the ships to come in. Dinny would never buy favour, and always knew he would be passed over. But his integrity would not let him crawl. His is the pain within today's parable about casual labourers - but there is joy in God's love for all.

Questions of Faith

Eternal Wages. The parable lesson is beautiful ~ God gives equal pay. It is the only wage available . . .