



THE LORD'S DAY

26th 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

Ezekiel 18 : 25-28

What a puzzle the prophet sets for us in today's reading: one fault can ruin a man's life, one repentance can amend a life of wrong-doing. Where is the justice, we ask? Read the whole of chapter 18. It opens with a proverb common in Israel but with a warning from the Lord that the truth of the proverb is partial: men and women must learn and accept personal responsibility.

Verses 5-9 outline the life of a good man, verses 10-13 of a bad man, verses 14-20 contrast different behaviours of father and son; and then come the painful verses 21-23 where God's forgiveness is total. The Lord wants all sinners to repent so that they may be forgiven.

Now comes today's reading. The good man can lose everything by turning to an evil way of life: the good of his previous life is forgotten by men and by God. The man is punished - and people object, just as they do when the sinner is not punished because he renounces his sin in order to live a good life! It seems human nature wants an average, a total divided by time and intensity, so that thirty good years outway one bad year, and one good year is not enough to counterbalance thirty bad years!

No, says the prophet. The Lord looks at the person, not at averages. The person is living a virtuous life or a sinful life. The Lord sees freedom of choice and judges accordingly. "I'm not so bad," we say. "You're not so good," is the reply.

LIVING IN TIME

We can always change;
Jesus, human and divine;
Half-hearted children.

*This week I shall . . .
Say and mean "Yes"*

Second Reading

Philippians 2 : 1-11

Today's reading contains a most wonderful poem - with daring theological thought and praise of the Lord Jesus. We wonder whether Paul composed the hymn or is quoting it.

The hymn is introduced by a plea from the apostle to be united in Christian love. He is, as often in his letters, afraid of rivalry and conceit. He implores humility, putting others before oneself - to be like Christ Jesus: and the hymn reflects Christ's humility.

The Son was divine but willingly sacrificed his divinity (sacrum facere= make holy=total offering to God = giving/offering his divinity to the Father) so that he could be truly human, a slave to the conditions and limitations of human life. Jesus had no protection against the elements of life except what his Father allowed him. Thus, according to his Father's will, he had to accept death, a shameful death on the cross.

But the Father raised Jesus from the dead (he did not rise of his own power, it is the Father who raises him), gave him the supreme name in all creation and welcomed him (back) to the divine life by making him Lord. What a wonderful hymn!

We wonder, wondering if the question makes sense: did the Son of God become nothing (as we are before conception) in order to become Jesus, son of Mary?

Wisdom from the Saints



"The
Kingdom
of God
needs
you"

Billy Graham

Gospel Reading

Matthew 21 : 28-32

Jesus has reached Jerusalem, been welcomed by his followers (vv.1-11) challenged the traders in the Temple (vv.12-16) and cleverly outwitted questions about his authority (vv.23-27). Now he tells three parables, and today's Gospel reading is the first of them - a story found only in Matthew.

We puzzle at the dialogue. The chief priests and elders walk right into a catch question, not very intelligently. We recognise a Christian bias in dramatising the discomfort of the authorities confronting Jesus, as often in the Gospel, and wonder they tried so hard, so often, always failing. We remember how we ourselves are at telling the story of a quarrel or discussion and how we make ourselves appear in the best light. The disciples tell of Jesus' dialogue in a similar way.

The parable is not easy. It contains two yeses and two nos, and we are expected to take each son's second response as the real one. But a pleasant "Yes" is reassuring, even if conditions change and the work is not done, we think: and a curt refusal almost spoils the favour which is later (reluctantly?) carried out. Neither son is much good.

They don't exist, says the parable! They are figments of Jesus' imagination. They symbolise the judgement of the "good" against "sinners". The parable seems to teach that sinners repent and good people might harden into pride: and we have arrived back at today's first reading - who we truly are is what God sees.

Questions of Faith

Repentance. When we forgive each other we want the forgiveness accepted. Guilt is over, though sorrow will always remain - good people are always sorry at their memory of hurt they have caused. Life begins anew after forgiveness - which is what today's first reading teaches. And we must accept that life begins anew after wickedness: trust has been destroyed.

People of God

Katie was the despair of her parents - a drug addict, cleverly hiding it from them for several years. When they discovered the truth they were devastated. Their love tried everything they could think of, but all failed. In despair they told her there was nothing more they could do and they were leaving her to God. Amazingly, Katie found God, found herself, fully embraced family love and life again, and for some years has lived in a community, helping other drug addicts to reform. The parents now feel blessed with a wonderful daughter.