



THE LORD'S DAY

27th 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 5 : 1-7

Isaiah ben Amoz lived in the 8th century BC. The first part of the Book of Isaiah is mainly his writings (chapters 1-39) full of beautiful poetry and the dynamism of a man alive with the love of God, a prophet with the urgency of a message for his people (and for the whole world) even though they are not faithful to the Lord.

Isaiah is full of foreboding that his beloved country will be conquered because of the sins of the people. Read chapters 3 and 4 and see the state of the nation, the immorality of the people and the prophet's fear of conquest and destruction.

Suddenly, Isaiah breaks into song about his friend (the Lord) who had a vineyard he tended and loved (Israel). Mark's Gospel parable of the wicked husbandman opens in a similar way - a vineyard lovingly and carefully mapped out. But nothing good is produced. All the loving work turns out to have been wasted. The vineyard is turned back to the wilderness it had been: the Lord had wanted a land of justice and integrity but sees only distress and bloodshed.

In John's Gospel (15:1-2) Jesus is the true vine that the Father had longed for and the new Israel (vineyard) are the followers. But there is sadness, also, in our Church history where we have seen so much distress and bloodshed in the Lord's vineyard.

SUFFERING LOVE

God's love rejected;
Paul's love accepted;
Jesus is God's rejected love.

Second Reading

Philippians 4 : 6-9

This has been a happy letter. Paul loves the community and is unembarrassed to tell them so. This is the final chapter - greetings and advice, the main burden of the correspondence completed: a sharing of faith, courage and love. Paul's being in prison is no barrier to his apostolic longing for the churches to stay faithful to the message he had brought them.

The opening words of chapter 4 express the feeling of the letter. Paul seems to be closer to the Philippians than to any other of the communities. We are curious over what has caused Evodia and Syntyche to quarrel, but we all know parish life. Paul doesn't doubt their goodness and accepts their human frailty. He wants them and the community to be happy (v.4), to be good-natured (v.5).

Then follows today's reading: the ideal outline of the Christian daily life - prayer, trust in the Lord, inner peace, integrity and nobleness of spirit. It is so positive - and then we smile as Paul offers himself as their model of virtue (v.9)!

Wisdom from the Saints



"An instant of pure love is more precious to God than all other good works together, though it may seem as if nothing were done"

St. John of the Cross

Gospel Reading

Matthew 21 : 33-43

Today's reading is the second of a cluster of parables. Its opening is reminiscent of Isaiah's song of the vineyard (today's first reading), and we recognise that God is the vineyard owner and the prophets are the servants punished for being messengers. A sad feature of Old Testament prophecy is that those who spoke in God's name earned mockery and cruelty.

The new detail in Matthew's parable is the appearance of the son of the vineyard owner. Because the inspiration for the parable is Isaiah's song of his friend's vineyard, we might expect the Suffering Servant of Isaiah's beautiful poems to appear. He does - he is Jesus. This is a subtle fulfilment of prophecy: Servant, Messiah, Saviour, Jesus, Son of God.

Mark (12:1 ff) and Luke (20:9 ff) also tell the story of the landowner, but with differences. Do read the three accounts. Notice that Luke and Matthew have the son killed outside the city (Calvary outside Jerusalem) but in Mark the son is killed within the city.

Questions of Faith

"Mixed Marriages" Many homes know the joy of love and freedom of faith, husband and wife finding their way towards God, on the same path or respecting each other's different paths. Other homes do not share faith in God, but their family love reflects mutual respect for freedom of conscience and belief. Sadly, other homes know the tension of religious difference and indifference, and the children are caught up in the hurt of love limited. The Church longs to share Christ with the world and knows that the message starts in the love of a good home nourished by faith. How do we encourage people to consider faith when making their lifetime commitment within their love?

People of God

Theresa married with hopes of a Catholic home for her future family, but soon discovered the pain of having her faith rejected by her husband. She let her faith fade in order to keep peace. A few years later she recovered strength of faith through the love of her parents, sharing it with her children when they came within the next few years. The children grew into the life of the Church with her but there was no sharing with their father. When they were old enough to talk about church he would ridicule their belief in God. Slowly, the children withdrew from church interest and attendance, and their mother knew the sadness of walking to church alone. In the teenage years they had nothing to do with church but always knew her love and respected her genuineness of faith. Her steadfast love guided them through the difficult years into their twenties. Now, two mature adults know their mother's love and tell her of their gratitude - but they still do not share her faith. She loves and prays - and respects their good moral lives. God is with her and with them.

This week I shall . . .
pray for families hurt by faith