



THE LORD'S DAY

1st Sunday of Advent (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 2 : 1-5

Today's vision of Jerusalem touches themes of the city's history - the Temple, the Law (held in the Ark of the Covenant) and the hill of Moriah that Abraham chose to be the place of sacrifice for Isaac (Genesis 22:2-4).

Isaiah glories in the history but sees the future as far more wonderful: Jerusalem holds the temple of the Lord God and the nations will come to be taught how to follow God's ways. There will be peace.

Chapter 2 makes a vivid contrast with chapter 1 where Isaiah has condemned the faithless reigns of some of the Judaeans kings, the traitorous lives of the people of Judah, their betrayal of the ideals given them by the Law and the empty ritual of religious worship - wordy prayers and bloodstained hands.

God's anger is justifiable, seems to soften (1:18), and then erupts again at the injustice and immorality of the city and its people. You will need to read chapter 1 to appreciate the joy and faith of today's reading.

Second Reading

Romans 13 :11-14

Paul's long letter is drawing to a close. It has been exhaustive and is the most thought-provoking of all his letters. He seems to have written it to introduce himself, preparing the Roman Christians for his visiting them on his way to the furthest parts of Europe. He seems to have written in the late 50's AD, and the length and strength of the letter suggest the importance of the Roman Church in those early years. We know nothing of the early apostles who first brought Christianity to Rome.

The first part of chapter 13 indicates Paul's loyalty to Roman authority (he was a Roman citizen, we remember) and we wonder if this is his education as a Pharisee or a conviction that came of his Christianity? A tax-paying supporter of Roman authority is no revolutionary.

Chapter 12 has prepared the way for the verses of today's reading. The time has come. Peace, not strife and revolution, is the call. The light of Christ is to fill the world: let it fill the lives of Roman Christians.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 24 : 37-44

Jesus urges his followers to be aware of his second coming and he reminds them of the sudden ending of the known world in the time of Noah. The ignorant and evil world had turned from God.

This is an invitation to read chapters 6, 7 and 8 of the Book of Genesis. Here are two, or even more, stories combined and various details are contradictory. The peoples of the world are referred to but with no sense of being real. No one speaks to Noah and he to no one. The unnoticing world hardly heeds an ark floating to safety . . . We can be the same, suggests Jesus: too busy with daily life to bother about long-term planning for eternal life.

Then Jesus switches direction. From a world that ignored Noah he turns to everyone who knows the need to protect property. He smilingly implies that burglars should announce the time of their coming to make protecting against them easy. The lesson is strong: no burglar announces his coming, and neither does God reveal the day or the hour of death. We live virtuously so as to die virtuously.

Wisdom from the Saints



"All nations shall come . . ."

Isaiah

LIFE'S PILGRIMAGE

Peoples of the world come to God;
Live in peace, says Paul;
Living for God, dying for God.

Wonder at the Advent of Christ

This week I shall . . .
read the stories of the Flood.

People of God

Noah was born just after Adam died, according to the Book of Genesis, and he became the new Adam. His three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth became the fathers of the three peoples of the new world after the flood. It seems strange to say that the Bible teaches that we are descended from Noah. The peoples who descended from Adam had become so evil that God regretted having created the world and determined to destroy it by a flood. But Noah was a good man: the Bible says that he walked with God (Genesis 6:9) just like his grandfather, Enoch, though his father, Methuselah, was not so good - yet he did live to be 969 years old, the oldest recorded age in the Bible! We smile with puzzlement at the way these early chapters of Genesis are written, but we recognise that within the stories great truths are being expressed: a good God, ungrateful mankind, hatred between brothers, goodness being rewarded, the close relationship of all humanity - in spite of different races and peoples . . .

Questions of Faith

Ham, Shem and Japheth were the sons of Noah, but Ham fell out of favour with his father when he mocked him (Genesis 9:20-27), and Noah cursed him to be the slave of his brothers.

This powerful little story has had horrifying repercussions in world history, used as justification for the enslavement of the races who were considered to be descendants of Ham. The Bible speaks of the Semites as being the chosen people, descendants of Japheth as friends of the Semites and the descendants of Ham to be inferior peoples. Ham was the father of the Canaanites whom the Jews despised and conquered to take their land.

It is blasphemy to use the Bible to justify conquest and racial prejudice.