



THE LORD'S DAY

2nd 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 11 : 1-10

The Book of Isaiah covers two-and-a-half centuries, 740-500 BC. Today's reading comes from the lifetime of the prophet himself, during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah (736-687 BC), when Samaria was conquered and Jerusalem under siege.

The terror of the times brings great longing for a powerful and good king, someone to establish justice and peace, to deliver the people from torment and darkness. Chapter 9 expresses the promise of a child born for the people upon whom the favour of the Lord God will rest: he will save God's people, destroy their enemies and establish peace.

Now comes today's reading. The child will become king, inspired by the spirit of Lord - which recalls David's anointing when he was only a shepherd boy. Throughout the Scriptures the spirit of God is gifts of wisdom and skill, and we see this most clearly in the coming of the Paraclete on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit guides God's anointed ones.

Verses 6-9 are delightful images of a safe world, a new creation and the harmonising of the first two chapters of Genesis.

Wisdom
from
the
Saints

"Behold the
handmaid
of the Lord"



Second Reading

Romans 15 : 4-9

The Church has two complementary theologies to guide us in everyday living: the moral and the pastoral. Moral theology teaches as clearly as possible what is right and wrong, and pastoral theology encourages and guides everyone, whatever their present situation, towards loving and serving God.

Moral theology offers the ideals by which we long to live, whilst pastoral theology encourages us, acknowledging our weaknesses and darkness, to do what is possible.

Chapter 14 of Romans is a wonderful chapter of pastoral theology. Paul compromises nothing but makes room for everyone of sincere good will. We are all one in Christ, the strong and the weak, and each of us has conscience to guide us (14-22).

Chapter 15 continues the theme, urging Christians to be responsible for one another so that in union of mind and heart we may give glory to God. Paul's "vision" sees the People of God bringing the pagans to God - which was the reason for Christ's becoming servant . . . Wonderful.

THE KINGDOM . . .

Longing for harmony and peace;
God's gentle love with us always;
How hard to share God's message!

This week I shall ponder...

moral and pastoral theology

Jesus' Advent
was first to Mary

Gospel Reading

Matthew 3 : 1-12

Isaiah's promise is to be fulfilled. The longing for a Messiah (Isaiah, chapters 9 and 11) is proclaimed in Matthew. A new Elijah appears as the voice of prophecy in the wilderness of Judea. Who was he, what preparation did he make for his task?

He was Jesus' cousin, John, six months older and living a similar hidden life to that of Jesus. For about thirty-five years these two cousins awaited God's call. They seem not to have met - John does not know Jesus at the baptism (John 1:33-34). Their calls from God came separately. There was no plan, no mission statement, just simple prayerful waiting upon God - and then action!

John's message "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" becomes Jesus message in Matthew (4:17), and so is John's arguing with the Jews about Abraham similar to Jesus' arguments in John (8:33-59).

The baptisms by John and Jesus differ radically: John's is a washing with water, life renewed; but Jesus' is a purifying with fire and the Holy Spirit, a new life.

Questions of Faith

The Immaculate Conception

This delicate doctrine was defined by Pope Pius IX on the 8th December, 1854. It teaches that Mary, from the first moment of her conception, was preserved free of all original and actual sin. We do not find this teaching in the Scriptures, but we do find texts which suggest the fullness of God's blessing: sin would never affect the life of Mary and she would be a perfect vessel to receive Christ in her womb, having lived a sinless life as a child of God.

The doctrine recognises God's honouring Mary, anticipating the wonderful moment when she was invited to be the mother of God's son - the virginal conception of Jesus occurring in her immaculate womb.

"Blessed is she among women."

People of God

Fr Jan Visser was a Dutch Redemptorist, and one of the best known and respected moral theologians in the Church of the 20th century. He was a member of the Papal Commission on birth control which advised Pope Paul VI before the Encyclical "Humanae Vitae" (1968) and a co-author of the Declaration on Sexual Ethics issued by Rome in 1975/6. Fr Visser was one of those (Frs Ford, Zalba and De Lastapis were the others) who urged there should be no change in the Church's traditional teaching on birth control, and his conservative moral stance was also evident in the Declaration which taught the intrinsic evil of homosexual acts. But Fr Visser was also a fine pastoral theologian who taught that we must help people live good Christian lives whatever their circumstances. He and St. Paul have much in common.