

THE LORD'S DAY

29th 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 45 : 1,4-6

For those who ponder God's place in human history today's reading provokes further thought. Do read the whole of chapter 45. The history of the world is under God's governance and rulers rule by God's permissive will, even though they do not know it. A divine plan for the world, for the human race, and above all for Israel, is always being worked out. We see the detail but Isaiah shares the divine vision and so sees the plan.

Thus anyone who creates favourable circumstances for Israel is to be praised. Cyrus conquers Babylon and gives freedom to the Israelites to return home. The waging of war and the cruel details of conquest are not weighed by Isaiah. The Lord will reward the virtuous working out of the divine plan but punish wicked men who achieve the divine purpose but whose methods are evil.

Babylon had conquered the Assyrians, now Cyrus conquers Babylon. In time, Cyrus and the empire of the Persians will be defeated by the Greeks - and they by the Romans. Always, the prophets promise, the Lord is watching over Israel and the world, rewarding virtue and punishing wrong-doing. The divine plan is invincible.

Chapter 45 explores the themes of salvation, victory, creation, individual heroic lives, the movements of empire, the shaping of nations: all are ruled by God's divine providence. Today, God speaks to Cyrus through Isaiah, though Cyrus does not hear because he is not a believer. He is moved by God, unknowingly, achieving God's will, believing it to be his own.

People of God

Christopher. We saw him carrying an injured young man almost his own age and build. The earthquake had devastated their village and the surrounding area and the people were trekking to where aid might await. The young and old walked together, the frail being carried by the stronger: children and babes, obviously, to be carried - but Christopher was making life possible for a man like himself: he was "Christbearer", like the Christopher in the original legend.

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 1 : 1-5

This is the first letter of St. Paul that we have. It was written from Corinth about AD50-51. The letter recalls Paul's time in Thessalonica (chapters 1-3) and the issues facing the Church. Paul and his companions had had to leave the city secretly, following civil disturbances, and the letter seems to wish to consolidate teaching given to the community, as well as answer questions that had since arisen - especially the fear and expectations of the "Last Days".

The letter is best known for its teaching on the end of time and the second coming of Christ, a theme that Paul has to develop in his second letter because of the fears and questions aroused by his first letter. The apostle urges watchfulness - the day of the Lord is a day for each one of us (end of life) as well as for the world (end of time).

Today's reading is typical of Paul's greetings at the opening of his letters: pleasant, union of prayer, sharing of faith. Timothy and Silvanus (Silas) share his greeting (see how he met them in Acts of the Apostles 15:36-16:3). That first Christian community knew breaking of friendships, questions about organisation, just as we do. In our Church there has always been the need of working out together what needs to be done and said.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

God rules human history;
History will come to an end;
Time (taxes) and eternity (prayer).

This week I shall . . . *be glad of paying taxes in God's world.*

Wisdom from the Saints



"Christ will return in heaven what we give him through his poor ones on earth"

Caesarius of Arles

Gospel Reading

Matthew 22 : 15-21

Chapter 22 opens with the Wedding Feast parable (told rather differently in Luke 14:16-24) and then gives us four controversy stories. Today's reading is the first - should Israel pay taxes to Caesar? The tax was a denarius (a day's wage) and all subject peoples had to pay the tax to their conquerors. The Pharisees objected to paying, whilst the Herodians accepted it as part of supporting the puppet king, Herod. Where did Jesus stand?

We see the trap. Whichever answer, Jesus would appear in the wrong, either to the Pharisees or the Herodians, and thus might be condemned. The Gospel says Jesus saw their malice - they were not interested in the truth, only in deceiving him.

Jesus' reaction is perfect - he throws the question back to them as one of conscience. If you accept Caesar, you pay Caesar. If you accept God, you give God worship and praise. There is no need to choose. Loyalty to God is not a barrier to loyalty to government, but the implication is: give to God first, and then you will know how to give to others, including civil authority.

Jesus' answer is simple, brilliantly simple. They had given him the denarius as the money used to pay the tax, thus acknowledging Roman conquest and civil authority and therefore the duty to pay taxes, as all citizens do. As believers they also knew their duties towards God. Jesus' answer is for every age.

Questions of Faith

God of Creation. The Old Testament saw everything as willed by God or allowed by God. Thus, in today's first reading, Isaiah sees Cyrus carrying out God's will when the people of Israel are made free by his conquering Babylon. We do not see God in creation in the same way today: we see freedom in movements of the earth and activities of the human race ~ but we acknowledge God's divine providence in creation's freedoms: God's love suffering and rejoicing throughout human history.