



THE LORD'S DAY

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

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

Numbers 21 : 4-9

Chapter 21 has opened with a horrifying incident. The Israelites have attacked the town of Arad in revenge for an attack on them, and killed every man, woman and child there. The Ancient World considered it a sacred act to put a town "under a ban" and then kill the inhabitants in honour of the god who had granted victory.

Today's reading is not a sympathetic picture of a cruel and discontented people. Snakes attack the camp and many people die. God gives a strange answer in a strange story, hard to believe literally.

The bronze serpent later became an object of idolatrous worship amongst the people, before being destroyed in the reign of the good king Hezekiah (716-687 BC). The healing granted by looking at the bronze serpent on its pole becomes, in the words of Jesus in the Gospel, an image of his crucifixion and its saving blessing (John 3:13-14).

Second Reading

Philippians 2 : 6-11

Paul wrote this letter, we believe, a few years before his death in Rome, possibly 60-62 AD. It is the warmest of his letters and Chapter one reflects love for the people and their faithfulness. He seems to think he has not long to live and thus he is prepared to be unguarded in his open liking for them.

But he is aware of human nature, knows anyone can be selfish, and Chapter two expresses this concern. He wants them to be like Christ Jesus - self-effacing, loving, considerate to others. Today's reading offers Jesus as example and inspiration.

The words seem to be a hymn - the first Christian hymn we know of. It is wonderful and even extravagant in its phrasing. Paul sees Jesus as emptying himself of being divine so that he can be truly human. In that humanity Jesus goes willingly towards death, the natural completion of human life: but is raised to new life, becoming Lord, to share in the glory of God.

Gospel Reading

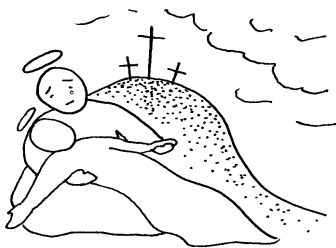
John 3 : 13-17

Jesus is engaged in a bewildering conversation with Nicodemus. Poor Nicodemus. His only words are questions - "How can a man be born again, enter his mother's womb?" "How can this be possible?" Jesus' answers broaden to become teachings for a wide audience, and Nicodemus fades from the scene. He reappears, defending Jesus (John 7:50-51) and is present at Jesus' death and burial (John 19:39).

Today's extract from Jesus' discourse is rich in reference and implication - Incarnation, Ascension, desert traditions of the Israelites, earthly healing as a sign of eternal salvation, God's eternal love, universal salvation brought by Christ Jesus.

The evening darkness had covered the approach of Nicodemus to Jesus (John 3:1-2) and it images the darkness of his mind which is seeking enlightenment. Evidently, it happened. He became a disciple.

Wisdom from the Saints



"I have been crucified with Christ"

St. Paul to the Galatians

The Tree of Life is the Wood of the Cross

People of God

The Pietà. The most beautiful statue in the world is Michelangelo's carving of Mary holding the body of Jesus after his death. The sorrow of Mary in that moment is something which has touched Christians through the ages, and many artists have expressed that sorrow. Today, we offer the wording of a hymn inspired by the beauty of Michelangelo's statue and recalling the death of a good Catholic man. Two days before he died he listened to a melody composed by his daughter - and called it "a hymn without words". The following day he collapsed, was nursed through the night by his family, but died without recovering consciousness. Words were written to the melody in honour of Our Lady in our constant request for her to be present "at the hour of our death" and to reflect the nursing and sorrow of the family - and of every family in such a situation.

*This week I shall . . .
say the Hail Mary, often.*

The Pietà

O Mary, standing by the cross,
you saw the dying of your son.

We, too, must see
our dear ones die,
our hearts full of sadness and love.

O Mary, staying at the cross,
Jesus spoke words to comfort you.

And we have shared
such words and tears,
our hearts filled with sorrow and love.

O Mary, waiting by the cross,
friends placed his body in your arms.

So we have held,
caressed and soothed,
our hands touched with tenderest love.

O Mary, standing at his tomb,
heart pierced with sorrow and with grief;
please pray for us now,
such hurt in our hearts,
our lives full of sadness in love.

Mary, our mother, strong in faith,
God's word your life, Jesus your son.

Death brings us to life
eternal with God,
Our faith, our hope, our love.

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Questions of Faith

The Cross is Christ's glory and exaltation. Jesus said: "Now is the Son of man to be glorified, and God will be glorified in him".

He also said "And I, when I am lifted up, will draw everyone to myself." We who believe share his exaltation and glory!

Jesus was divine. Emptied himself of divinity to become human. Lived and died with perfect love. Was raised by God to divinity again. He shared our humanity, we share his divinity.