



THE LORD'S DAY

23rd Sunday of Year C

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

Wisdom 9 : 13-18

We date the writing of this book in 50 BC, probably at Alexandria in Egypt - a centre of great learning. The book has three sections: (1) Chapters 1-5, addressed to Jews and discussing questions of final destiny for the righteous and the wicked; (2) Chapters 6-9, addressed to Gentile rulers, extolling the virtues of true wisdom; (3) Chapters 10-19 look at God's guiding the history of the people of Israel.

Today's reading comes from the middle section. Chapter 6 has urged rulers to cultivate wisdom - just as Solomon did; chapter 7 speaks of Solomon's prayer to be wise (vv 7-14) and chapter 8 speaks of wisdom as a gift available to everyone - but essential to rulers.

Now chapter 9 is a prayer for wisdom. It is as though Solomon were praying, needing God's help. He feels inadequate for his great task (vv 5-12) and broadens his thought to the truth that everyone needs such guidance. The influence of Greek philosophy is apparent in the contrast between the body of clay and the mind that yearns for understanding. Only Divine revelation, guiding the soul, can rescue us from being clayey fools.

GOD GUIDES . . .

the wise look towards God;
the wise recognise all is from God;
the wise accept the duties of love.

This week I shall . . .
pay God what I owe.

Second Reading

Philemon 9-10, 12-17

Philemon was Paul's friend, probably a Christian convert. In prison Paul met a runaway slave, Onesimus (meaning "useful", a good name for a slave), who is now being returned to Philemon. The slave would be due for severe punishment, but Paul pleads for him in this letter that Onesimus carries to his angry master.

Paul's plea is for clemency, but there is also an implication that Onesimus might return to Paul to become "Christ's slave" instead of Philemon's.

The letter is short, well worth reading. The verses chosen for today's reading show a clever playing on the conversion of Philemon. If he is truly a Christian he will be willing to forgive Onesimus by seeing him as a brother in Christ, rather than as a slave he owns. Paul's offering to pay compensation (vv 18-19) emphasises Philemon's duty: Paul has given him Christ, so he should give Paul Onesimus.

Wisdom from the Saints



"I saw Mary
bathed
by rivers
of grace
flowing out
from the
Blessed
Trinity"
St. Gertrude

8th September : Birthday of Our Lady

Gospel Reading

Luke 14 : 25-33

Luke has just told Jesus' parable about the banquet to which invited guests were reluctant to go - too busy with family and work - and their places have been taken by the poor and disabled, and even vagrants. It seems none of the original guests (the Chosen People) has come and everyone (the World) has taken their place.

Now, today, Jesus seems to draw the lesson from that strange parable (all the parables are strange - they turn on an apparent lack of common sense) by teaching that all of us have been invited to the kingdom's banquet and we must leave family and work to attend.

Who could take this? Leave wife and children and elderly parents to fend for themselves (vv 25-26)? It is clearly wrong. Jesus does not mean this literally, inviting selfish chaos, running away from duties and responsibilities. The two parables about a tower and a war may hold an answer: don't start what you can't finish; don't have/be family unless you are willing to accept the duties of love; don't promise to follow Christ unless you are sincere and willing to be a true disciple.

Questions of Faith

"Leaving all for God"

The Aramaic language works with strong contrasts - so that "love" and "hate" mean to grant "first" and "second" place. Jesus is asking that God be acknowledged first, a lesson that the martyrs understood when they sacrificed life and human love to be true to Christ - but knowing that the sacrifice ("sacrum facere" - "to make holy") would be complete in God's love and so the human love be perfected. To leave family, in the Gospel sense, is to put God first and then find all other love in relation to God's love. It seems a hard saying - Jesus' asking us to "leave" family - but we all know that certain loves must come first and others are relative to greater love.

People of God

Religious Brothers and Sisters. As the life of the Church developed, so grew an understanding that a single life chosen for God was as pleasing as the married life in which children were born and God's plan for Creation continued: "Increase and multiply and fill the earth" was seen by the people of Israel as the primary commandment for man and woman. St Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, offers advice that is his - he tells us - not that of Christ: that to stay unmarried is a better choice because it leaves people free to live for the Lord. That idea developed in the life of the Church into various forms of hermit and monastic lives, often sealed with the making of vows of obedience, poverty and chastity; by these vows men and women offered themselves in trusting faith to God - owning nothing, sacrificing their own wills and family life. The Gospel is for everyone: so we know that Jesus' words in today's Gospel are not meant for a few - they are for us all. They mean that in whatever life we choose Jesus asks us to put God first. Good people - single, married, religious - reflect that truth.