



THE LORD'S DAY

33rd 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

Malachi 3 : 19-20

Malachi is "My Messenger", "My Angel" and the only name this little book offers. The book was written fairly early in the 5th century BC and reflects deep disappointment in the response the Lord has had in return for loving Israel. The priests and people have not been faithful and marriage has lost its ideals.

Indeed, the people have fallen away from the idealism rekindled on their return from the Babylonian captivity. The Day of the Lord's judgement is approaching when he will come to take possession of the Temple and ask account of the people. Verses 3-5 reveal the evil-doers who will be most severely judged. The virtuous will be rewarded (3:17) but the evil-doers punished (3:18-20), which is today's short reading.

The final verses of this short book express a belief in the coming of Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord - a prophecy fulfilled in John the Baptist.

People of God

Stewards of Creation Each of us is invited to be like St. Francis of Assisi. He loved God's creation and is a patron saint for all who love the earth and want to save it from the abuse of humanity's selfishness. Francis saw created beauty reflecting God's glory wherever he looked. In our days, we are aware of men and women, believers and non-believers, who look with a similar love at all aspects of our universe . . . oceans and land, the many forms of life they contain and nourish . . . the air we breathe and the wonders of the skies . . . our common humanity . . . the child in the womb . . . the poor who suffer injustice . . . the world.

The vision is human, natural and supernatural. Creation is a gift to treasure and reverence. St. Francis treasured it because it came from God, the non-believers treasure what is gift. St. Paul speaks of the earth's groaning in one great act of giving birth, waiting for the revelation of the children of God. We await. Today's readings invite us.

*This week I shall . . .
wonder at the night sky . . .*

Second Reading

2 Thessalonians 3 : 7-12

Today's reading addresses the primary themes of community and work. The two letters to the Thessalonians are full of awareness of the coming of Christ, and it is clear the community felt the time of the world's end was near. Paul realises he has been too dramatic in 1 Thessalonians and is more careful in this second letter. He urges the goodness of everyday life: a steady job, earning one's living, helping in the community. He is angry with those who interpret the nearness of Christ's coming to mean there is no need to work and sees this so-called "prayerful awareness" as a cloak for being idle.

Paul offers himself as an example of someone always at work, not presuming on the kindness of others but paying his way by earning his wages (vv 7-9). Then he goes further (vv 10-11) in urging the punishment of hunger on those not willing to work.

Paul's understanding of human nature is stark. He is not patient with the scrounger or the dependent, insists upon responsibilities and duties rather than kindness and tolerance. He knows the lazy and self-indulgent and does not want them indulged. Work, he says, and earn your living.

Questions of Faith

The End of the World History is full of predictions of the Day and the Hour. All have been wrong - we are still here. The nonsense of false interpretations of the Bible makes us impatient with loud voices who proclaim new understandings. We trust in the providence of a loving God, and in the calm sense of the Gospel where Jesus tells us that no one knows the day or the hour - not even the Son. Only the Father knows. Those who play upon people's credulity by claiming to understand prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, particularly, are crude readers and preachers of their own word of God, not God's Word. We wait in faith and peace, ignoring the scaremongers. They have always been wrong.

Gospel Reading

Luke 21 : 5-19

We have just had the story of the Widow's mite (vv 1-5). The setting is the Temple in Jerusalem, and alongside the poor widow Jesus has seen the wealthy making their large offerings. The lesson we learn from the story is the contrast between being generous and being ordinary: it is not a contrast between small and large offerings. Everyone can be generous, even though many can give only a little - which they give generously.

The conversation turns to the Temple itself, its magnificence a tribute to the many and sometimes generous offerings made for its upkeep. Jesus warns it will end in destruction. The disciples recognise the truth - all things come to an end - but want to understand what he means and when the destruction will occur.

The answer is expressed in familiar apocalyptic terms (compare Matthew 24:4-14, Mark 13:5-13 for the same teaching put differently). The destruction of the Temple, the end of Judaism as the disciples understood it, merges with the end of the world and becomes an image of it. The message passes from being a local one to a universal one, implying that all disasters are heralds of the final disaster - the end of the world.

But within the terrifying events of war and nature there is an assurance of peace for those who trust in God (vv 14-19). Pain and suffering there will be, but the peace of faith, also.

THE CASUAL BELIEVER

Takes God for granted;
Is prayerfully lazy, not virtuous;
Sees without understanding.

Wisdom from the Saints

"The ways of this
world are as
fickle and
unstable
as a sudden
storm.

St. Bede

