



# THE LORD'S DAY

## 2nd Sunday of Advent (Year C)

The Watermead Apostolate offers this weekly newsletter as a helpful guide and background to the readings used at our Catholic Mass each Sunday. Watermead began in 1992 as a voice for people who wish to share understanding of living their faith through their various God-given gifts and talents. We frame these gifts by publishing them as books, cards and resources - and we record and publish the music. We also arrange retreats and pilgrimages.

For information about the work of our apostolate, to download our resources or to offer newsletter contributions, do feel welcome to contact us at:

Watermead Apostolate, The Watermead Centre, c/o St. Joseph's, 12 Goodwood Road, Leicester LE5 6SG : Telephone 0044 (0)116 220 7881 / 7880  
Download newsletters from [www.watermead-apostolate.com](http://www.watermead-apostolate.com) Contact us via the **Contact us Page** on our shop website [www.watermeadshop.co.uk](http://www.watermeadshop.co.uk)

### First Reading

*Baruch 5 : 1-19*

The Book pretends to be one written during the exile in Babylon (587-534 BC) and sent to Jerusalem to be read in the synagogues. It was actually written much later - possibly 2nd century BC, or 1st century AD after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. It was written as an encouragement in time of persecution and conquest, reflecting several centuries of such suffering.

Baruch sends greetings and money for sacrificial offerings at Jerusalem, expresses trust in God who is with them in their suffering and recalls Wisdom as the great gift from God. He reminds Jerusalem of Divine Providence, and in today's reading urges Jerusalem to see herself as God's Queen whom God will make known throughout the world.

The mother Jerusalem is urged to look for the return of her exiled children who will become princes and princesses in a new age. In verse 7 we have the image used by John the Baptist and Isaiah - a land easy to traverse, God's way is clear.

#### HERALDS

Baruch and John the Baptist prepare God's way, Paul shares it.

*This week I shall . . .  
herald the coming of Christ  
in my Christmas cards.*

### Second Reading

*Philippians 1 : 3-6, 8-11*

Here are heart-warming verses from the opening of Paul's letter to his favourite Christian community. He wrote to them from Ephesus (56-57) as a preparation for his coming to visit them once again.

The reading is full of thanksgiving - to God and to the people. They received God's good news from Paul, have shared it with others through their good works, and have a precious place in his heart. He misses being with them but can still express his love for them by encouraging them to love one another.

Reference to "chains" may indicate Paul is writing from prison, and some scholars believe he wrote from Rome during his first house imprisonment - when he was free to preach the Gospel and gather the Roman Christians at his home. That might explain the mention of chains (verse 7, strangely omitted from today's reading) and the longing in his words: he fears he may never see the Philippians again.

#### Wisdom from the Saints



"Every time I pray for you I pray with joy"

St Paul to the Philippians

### Gospel Reading

*Luke 3 : 1-6*

Luke's political and social details allow us to date the ministry of John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' ministry to the years AD 27-28. John and Jesus are about 35 years old and their short ministries are beginning.

Note that Annas and Caiaphas are the High Priests. Under Jewish law the High Priest was appointed for life but Roman authority prevented that custom and appointed Caiaphas in the year AD 18 (until AD 38), whilst Annas had ruled AD 6-15. We remember the arrest of Jesus and his being taken to the house of Annas - suggesting Annas was still the real power.

The historical background fades. It has served to herald the truly momentous event - the word of God coming to John the Baptist so that he might prepare the way of the Lord. John's message comes from the wilderness - recalling Moses and the calling of God's people to the Promised Land and the returns from Assyrian and Babylonian exile. A new age is to begin.

#### Questions of Faith

**Excommunication** is a judgment by which Christians are separated from the life of the Church, unable to receive Holy Communion. The most common form of this exclusion is of those who have married outside the Church.

We need to distinguish between:  
(a) those who casually marry in a register office or in another Christian Church or even in a ceremony of another faith ~ without following the procedures for blessing which the Catholic Church lays down and  
(b) those who marry a second time outside the Church because the Church cannot dissolve the first marriage.

In this second type of marriage there is often great pain because the person has to balance loneliness and a longing for Holy Communion.

### People of God

**Catherine's** marriage was unhappy. Her husband was cruel and unfaithful and finally he deserted her. She was sad in her loneliness but another man came into her life and slowly she realised she could begin life again with him. She knew there was no chance of marrying in church and that she would be excluded from receiving Holy Communion. She did not think of this as being "Excommunication" but she knew the pain she would feel if she were at mass and could not approach the altar.

She married Dennis and they have been wonderfully happy for over forty years. In all that time she has not received Holy Communion. She has suffered spiritual loneliness and exile every time she watches people go to the altar ~ but she knew she had to accept that pain when she married a second time.

Her priest cousin asked her to consider quietly returning to Holy Communion. She couldn't, she said, because although she believed in God's love for her she knew the rules of the Church and Holy Communion is not for people in her position. But she and her cousin have a pact: when she is dying he will come to anoint her and give her Holy Communion. John the Baptist's preparing the way of the Lord and Baruch's message of hope for Jerusalem will hurt her at church today. Their messages are not yet for her.