



THE LORD'S DAY

4th Sunday of 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
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First Reading

Jeremiah 1 : 4-5, 17-19

Jeremiah began his work of prophecy in 627 BC - at the age of 16 or 17! His call was to speak against the complacency of the people and their leaders, and to warn against trusting in political alliances: God alone is their support.

The beautiful opening words of today's reading reflect faith in an Eternal God, one outside of time, for whom all that happens is within a single vision. It is an extraordinary view of God - but is brought down to the single individual life: God knows us before we are formed in the womb.

How can this be? Knowing, as we do, the millions of possibilities at each conception, how can we think of a God who has already chosen the one to be conceived? How do we explain the death of so many children in the womb, and especially in the first days of life? How do we answer those who see conception as an incident and not divine providence?

For Jeremiah these questions do not arise. He is looking back and sees the wonder of divine providence in all that has happened to him: God always wanted him to be prophet to the nations and, because chosen, he has always had the strength to carry out the Lord's commands. Inadequate, "child", as he thinks himself to be - the work has been done. God was with him.

**God chooses us "before life"
as Jeremiah and Jesus show us**

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 12:31 ~ 13:13

Here is the best known passage in St. Paul's writings. The message is the most universal one because everyone can hear and understand and live it - which is Paul's purpose. He is dismayed at the people's boasting of spiritual gifts (especially speaking in tongues) and wants to show that all spiritual gifts are less than love because the way of love can be everyone's.

"Love" has not been mentioned in chapter 12 along with other gifts: it is as though it is so much greater that it would be lessened by being one of a list. Instead, Paul accepts all the ministries and gifts of which the community is aware, vaguely places them in importance (12:4-11 ~ Wisdom is first, Tongues is least), and now bursts into a hymn in praise of Love. It is for everyone, which makes it the greatest gift. Everyone may live it and its beautiful qualities enrich every family, home and community. It is the most adult of gifts, includes the strength of martyrdom and is eternal.

Wisdom from the Saints



"The way of salvation
is easy;
it is enough
to love"

St. Margaret
of Cortona

Gospel Reading

Luke 4 : 21-30

Jesus has just come to Nazareth, early in his ministry. His home now is at Capernaum (Matthew 4:12-13) so the people who watched him grow to manhood are surprised at his gracious way of speaking, his claiming to speak in the spirit of Isaiah.

Their surprise suggests he had never spoken to them previously. To them he is only Joseph's son (is Joseph still alive?) and he had no formal training in speaking for the Synagogue or they would have been prepared for this event.

Jesus challenges them because they will not believe in him or accept him. When he reminds them of other prophets and the way they were treated the people become angry and want to expel him from Nazareth, even to kill him.

Today's reading moves swiftly - from admiration for his gracious words to wanting to kill him. Scholars advise us to see three separate visits brought together in this one passage: verses 16-22 (the people like him), 23-24 (surprise and doubt), 25-30 threats. Luke heightens the drama by drawing the visits closely together.

Questions of Faith

Infanticide. Moral philosophers are again raising the question: would killing the child after birth now be acceptable *after judging there could be no quality of life* - just as killing the child in the womb has become?

Two doctors argued it out in a radio interview recently. The one defined a child as a baby able to live separated from the mother, whilst the other insisted there was no difference between the child in the womb and the child outside the womb.

Neither mentioned God. Neither opposed abortion, the one limiting the killing to the womb and the other extending our human power to determine life and death.

This week I shall mourn

People of God

An Unknown Party Spokesman. In the 1970's a fairly prominent member of one of our political parties proposed that no newborn child should be regarded as legally alive until after three days. During that time doctors and others would determine whether the child should live. He insisted that this would do away with the need for abortion and because giving birth is, in general, safer for the woman than having an abortion, women also would benefit. He insisted there is no difference between the child in the womb and the child outside the womb - it is the same person. Mistakes are made, he said, terminations are wrongly carried out, harm is done during the operations - and therefore society would benefit from the freedom to see the child first, and then judge its right to live.

His Party immediately disowned the statement, insisting it had no relevance to the Party's policies. They did not answer his logic: *the child in the womb is the same as the child who has been born*. If society accepted his logic no child's life would be terminated, inside or outside the womb. It is God who gives life and love. (See today's "Question of Faith").