



THE LORD'S DAY

7th 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:

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First Reading

1 Samuel 26 : 2-23

Today's reading is like a film script. We are given close-ups, long-range, voices that carry impossible distances, conversations that are like speeches, voices that speak close to the victim but are not heard. It is the stuff of folk-lore. The dramatist is enjoying his story and is not concerned about realism.

But the power of the reading is in its meaning: David is a just man who fears God. He will not harm the Lord's anointed, he will not accept "a divine providence" that seems to give him an opportunity when to take advantage of the opportunity would be to do wrong.

Abishai, David's companion, is his nephew, the son of David's sister Zeruah, and another of her sons was Joab who became David's commander-in-chief.

Read also 1 Samuel 23:19-24:23 and we wonder whether these are two accounts of the same story or, indeed, two separate events. The literal reading of the Bible is rarely straight forward.

RESURRECTION

is present and future.

Like Paul, we live the life
of the risen Christ now:

With Jesus we reach
for the divine ideals.

David, also, chose the divine
rather than the human way.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 15 : 45-49

Paul is trying to explain the resurrection of the body. Earlier, in verse 35, he sounds like a poor teacher who ridicules a student's question because he cannot answer it; but Paul then speaks powerfully.

There is a radical difference, and yet a continuity, between the body that dies and the body that God raises to new life. Paul's example is fascinating: the spiritual body that God raises is related to the physical body that died just as a seed is linked to the plant that grows (an acorn becomes an oak tree!).

But Paul knows this is not convincing enough, so he comes to the resurrection of Christ as the real faith we profess. Because God did it for Jesus, so will God do it for us - the "Adam" in us dies and the "Christ" in us rises from the dead.

Wisdom from the Saints



"One must see God in everyone"

St. Catherine Labouré

Gospel Reading

Luke 6 : 27-38

Today's reading continues the "Sermon on the Plain" we heard last Sunday. We read what is familiar to us from Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" and recognise the original document ("Q") in the background of both Gospel accounts.

Today's is an impossible challenge: we must forgive enemies and those who hate, curse or abuse us. The obvious ones we love bring us no virtue: that form of love is expected of all of us, and sinners expect to love at least like that: but the Christian must learn from God that the highest ideals ask for a universal love - God's love, reflecting from and through each of us.

The implied promise at the end of the reading is fascinating: the promise offers infinity and eternity. To be a Christian is to be another Christ, forgiving in death to rise to new life. Only faith could accept that.

Questions of Faith

Forgiveness requires time, maybe even years. The drunk, who frightens wife and children and demands forgiveness the following day, is a bully. The Gospel is not on his side. Until he repents and there is no more drunkenness and violence he is unforgivable. He will simply repeat his behaviour. The bully and the spiteful demand to be forgiven so they feel comfortable, but they are not to be forgiven until the bullying and spite stop.

To retain sin as well as to forgive sin is the blessing given to the apostles on the evening of the Day of Resurrection, "Whose sins you forgive . . ." (St John 20:23). Jesus is telling the apostles that forgiveness must sometimes be withheld. We have the right and duty to do the same: and we have the human need to wait for hurt to heal.

People of God

St. Polycarp was a disciple of St. John the Evangelist. He became the Bishop of Smyrna, and when a persecution broke out in the middle of the 2nd century he knew he would be arrested. Peacefully he awaited his captors and when brought before the court knew that he had the sympathy of the proconsul - who, indeed, begged him to renounce Christ so that he might be set free. Polycarp answered that he was now 86 years old, had always served Christ and could never deny him. The proconsul threatened death by fire and the saint answered that the fire would last only a short while and then he would be free. Tied to the stake he thanked God for allowing him to drink Christ's chalice of suffering. The fire was lit, but we are told it did him no harm! So he was stabbed to death and his dead body burnt.

A lovely message that Polycarp left was: "Be firm in your faith, love one another and be united in the truth." His feast day is celebrated on 23rd February.

This week I shall . . .
pray for the grace to forgive
and accept forgiveness.