



THE LORD'S DAY

32nd Sunday of Year B : 11th November 2018

The Watermead Apostolate offers this weekly newsletter as a helpful guide and background to the readings used at our Catholic Mass each Sunday. Watermead is the voice of people from many parishes and areas who wish to share understanding of living their faith through their God-given 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 Kings 17 : 10-16

We are in the middle of the 9th century BC. Elijah, whose name means "Yahweh is God", is God's prophet. Ahab is king of Israel, Jezebel is his queen - and they serve the Baal, the God of Jezebel and her Philistine people. Elijah knows God is displeased and announces a drought as a punishment for the sins of Ahab and the people (v.1); but Elijah is guided by the Lord to a wadi (dry stream-bed) where he can hide. There the stream will give him drink and the ravens will bring him food. The Prophet is safe.

But only for a while. The stream dries up and the Lord bids Elijah go east. Now begins today's reading. Elijah begs water and food from the widow. She seems to know nothing of his coming her way, though the Lord had told Elijah (v.10) he would inform her; but she is generous with the little that she has. She is "anawim", God's little one, caught up helplessly in the drought caused by the sins of Ahab and Jezebel. We wonder at the justice of God, punishing the innocent along with the guilty.

The widow's kindness is wonderfully rewarded. She and her son are blessed to have sufficient food for the future. Do read on (verses 17-24) for another miracle granted to the widow through the power of Elijah's prayer.

Second Reading

Hebrews 9 : 24-28

Chapter 9 is full of reverence for the sacrifice and worship of the Old Covenant. The promise of the glory of the New Covenant has been spoken of in chapter 8, with the fullness of God's law written on the human heart (chapter 8:10) and in the mind of believers.

Now, in chapter 9, the details of Old Law sacrifice are lovingly remembered. In such reverence the greatness of the sacrifice of Christ can more deeply be appreciated. Today's reading makes contrast between the sanctuary of the Temple and of Heaven - two tabernacles (dwelling places) of God. Christ has opened the second one for us and we follow him into the heavenly sanctuary through our worship and prayer.

That offering will be completed when Christ comes amongst us for the second time, to grant salvation to all those waiting for him. This is called the "Parousia", the full appearing. In all the New Testament this is the only explicit reference to Christ's second coming.

Gospel Reading

Mark 12 : 38-44

What a contrast Mark offers in today's reading between the self-important and the widow. Luke has a similar contrast (Luke 20:45 - 21:4).

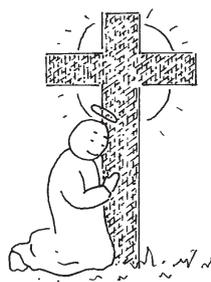
Jesus' warning to his disciples and followers, to beware of learned men who seek their own benefit in all they do, is very similar in the two accounts; but Mark's telling of the story is more interesting than Luke's account.

In Mark, Jesus sets himself to watch the offerings being made: it is not a casual moment. This suggests to us that the giving was in some way public - perhaps even announced out loud? The rich may appear generous in the amount they give, but we understand the widow's humility if she has to announce what she gives. Her giving is laughable - just two small coins - but Jesus calls his disciples to point out the lesson: she was more generous than the rich because she gave all she had.

We wonder at her giving all - but the explanation is quite simple. Widows received a daily living allowance; so the widow knew she would be helped by the community on the following day. She could go short on this day to be able to offer something to the Lord at the Temple.

"A little offering given with great love" is the way that Mother Teresa of Calcutta might explain this story. That is the Gospel message.

Wisdom from the Saints



"Beneath
the cross of Jesus
I fain would take
my stand"

Elizabeth Clephane

This week I shall . . .
give something with great love.

ONE DAY AT A TIME

Kindnesses remembered;
Sacrifices and the heart;
Giving all each day.

People of God

The Bereavement Group met every month. They were good for each other, giving support and encouragement in the loneliness that they all knew. New friendships were formed and there was a sense of understanding that they all shared each other's suffering. There were two groups within the group - those whose spouses had died, and those who had been deserted. They were aware of difference in the suffering and one evening chose to bring it into the open. Which was the greater loss - death or desertion? Slowly, around the room, the widows, the widowers, the divorcees and deserted spoke of their feelings. Each had a personal sorrow but an openness to the sorrow of others. It became clear, as the final stories were being told, that they knew: the greater pain was in the ones whose spouses were still alive. The widows and widowers felt the pain of love's memories: the deserted felt the pain of broken love. Elijah's widow and the Gospel widow - what were their lives?

Questions of Faith

Tomorrow. The sign in the cafe raised a smile: "Tomorrow everything's free, today everyone pays." Tomorrow never comes.

Today is the day in which we find tomorrow and yesterday - through the blessings of anticipation and memory. To look forward and to look back are wonderful blessings, found in the treasure which is today.

God's gift of life is one day at a time - and the Gospel widow gives all today, making it a happy yesterday tomorrow