



THE LORD'S DAY

Feast of the Epiphany

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

Isaiah 60:1-6

This lyrical passage comes from the third part of the Book of Isaiah. A disciple of the prophet (Isaiah now long dead) writes of a wonderful coming of the world to Jerusalem to honour God.

The peoples come from the west, by sea, and overland from the east - reminding us of the opening words of Eucharistic Prayer III.

The riches and wealth of the world are brought to the Lord and two gifts in particular are mentioned - gold and incense. The details are familiar: we know them from the story in Matthew's Gospel of the coming of the wise men from the east - the light is the star and the gifts are for God (incense) and a king (gold).

The world comes to acknowledge the Lord in Jerusalem, but in Matthew's Gospel we learn the fullness of the truth: the star guides to Bethlehem and there is a third gift - myrrh for a burial.

Second Reading

Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

Paul was under house arrest in Rome for the years 61-63. Whilst there he wrote several letters, including this one to the Ephesians. Paul had lived at Ephesus for nearly three years (54-57) and knew the community well. His letter is a general one as well as being intended for them.

His main concern is to teach the universal salvation brought by Christ. The old division of Jew and Gentile has been dissolved and the revelation of Christ is a fullness that former ages could only glimpse, even though they longed for the fulfilment of God's promise and the coming of the Messiah.

Paul is overwhelmed that he has been chosen as the apostle to bring the Good News to the Gentiles, and such is his joy that the pain of being in prison is hardly noticeable. Indeed, many scholars believe that one of Paul's disciples wrote this letter - hence the lack of personal suffering.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 2:1-12

The story is full of symbolism. The star is guidance for those seeking to find God - the "light" of today's first reading.

The wise men come to Jerusalem in mistake for Bethlehem about five miles away. Jerusalem was God's dwelling place on earth, in the Temple on Mount Zion, but the babe is born in Bethlehem, as the prophet Micah had foretold.

Mary and the babe are in their home. Matthew says nothing of a stable (neither does Luke!), nor of Mary and Joseph coming from Nazareth. Only later, after the return from Egypt, does Nazareth become their home.

The Wise Men bring three gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. This is the fullness of today's first reading and Matthew is fulfilling Isaiah: we find a babe at Bethlehem, not Jerusalem, and see him as Saviour as well as God and King.

Questions of Faith

Lay Apostolate is the recognition that the work of the Church belongs to every baptised member of the Church and not simply to dedicated Sisters, Brothers and Priests.

The witness given by organisations such as the Volunteer Missionary Movement, those who help the religious orders in their work and those who work for many good organisations ~ all remind us that God's call is for everyone: we all have a part to play.

This week I shall . . .
share a prayer with those in
heaven (and thank them)
who have inspired my faith.

WISDOM AND FAITH

Wisdom is humble because it seeks
God in a baby in Bethlehem, honours
him as king, and loves him as Saviour.
The world admires success,
but faith finds God.

People of God

Fergus O'Grady was appointed Vicar Apostolic to Prince Rupert in British Columbia, Canada, in 1956. Find Prince Rupert by following the west coast of Canada about five hundred miles north of Vancouver, and then the Yellowhead Highway runs inland as far as Prince George and on to the Rockies. From Prince George a road runs north to the Peace River country (Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Chetwynd, etc.): those two roads became the diocese of Prince George in the early 1960's.

The diocese is 147,000 square miles - one and a half times the size of Great Britain! The people were spread out in small townships and Native reservations and there were few priests, but Bishop O'Grady had a vision of a diocese based upon the work of the lay apostolate. He would invite people to give two years of their lives to God and neighbour and he promised them "long hours, hard work, no pay." He believed the human heart longs to give and love generously, and he was right. People from around the world asked to be involved in the wonderful vision of Church that Bishop O'Grady inspired, and the diocese of Prince George offered magnificent witness to what is possible when someone is inspired to touch the hearts and lives of others. Schools and churches were built by volunteers, parishes and schools staffed by volunteers, and generous men and women followed the call in helping in all diocesan work.

Bishop Fergus O'Grady was one of the finest Churchmen of the twentieth century. Everyone who knew and worked with him loved him and was inspired by him.

Wisdom from the Saints



"Come, and
I promise you
long hours,
hard work
and no pay"

Bishop Fergus O'Grady
(And they came!)