



THE LORD'S DAY

Feast of the Holy Family (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

Ecclesiasticus 3 : 2-6,12-14

Ecclesiasticus is a long book of 51 substantial chapters. Read chapter 3 immediately and appreciate its wanting to balance the possessing and sharing of wisdom. The author is Ben Sirach and the book was written near the beginning of the 2nd century BC.

It is a fascinating compilation of religious and moral teaching, of practical wisdom and counselling. There are proverbs, prayers, psalms. You will enjoy dipping into its many and varied pages.

Today's reading follows passages on the Lord's gift of Wisdom, fear of the Lord, moral courage and trust. Interesting to note that the father and mother are treated as equals, thus no greater respect for the father; and the failure of a father's mind is taken as a particular example of the son's need to respect and look after his parents.

Second Reading

Colossians 3 : 12-21

Chapter 3 begins with encouragement to live a truly Christian life. Things of heaven are to be preferred to those of earth, old ways are to be forgotten and the new Christian life is to be lived.

Today's reading has Paul focussing on the community and on the family. The first we can easily identify with - peace, gentleness, mutual love - and we understand the completion of all in the bonding that love can bring. There is a place for everyone and no one is to be excluded - not the uncircumcised, nor the slave, nor the worst of pagan barbarians, the Scythians.

When Paul speaks of the family we smile. As he changes focus he seems to contradict himself: wife is to be submissive, but husband to be loving and gentle; children to obey, but parents not to ask too much. Paul recognises, as we do, family tensions - but there is no blueprint here: each of us can quote a particular aspect but Paul expresses no favouritism, only balance. How the balance is to be achieved he leaves to each family - he supports each point of view!

Gospel Reading

Luke 2 : 41-52

The Law required every faithful Jew to go to the Temple three times each year. Jesus is twelve years old and has reached maturity. He goes to Jerusalem with his parents and visits the Temple.

The Passover festivities lasted seven days. Where did people stay during those seven days? At the end of the festival the pilgrims begin the five day journey home.

A day's journey, a day's return journey, and on the third day Jesus is found in the Temple, listening and asking questions - he is the boy wishing to become the man.

Lodgings and Temple would be the first places where Mary and Joseph would seek Jesus, humanly speaking, and he is found early. We see a reflection of Holy Week - they lost him in the evening of one day, were in the darkness of one day, and early on the third day he was found: death, tomb, resurrection.

The dialogue between Mary and Jesus is difficult to appreciate. It suggests thoughtlessness and lack of maturity in Jesus and lack of faith and understanding in Mary. The passage closes with the mystery Mary knows she must ponder.

Wisdom from the Saints



"Those who
desire nothing
but God
are rich
and happy"

Alphonsus Liguori

MUTUAL LOVE

Today's readings all look
for understanding and true love
within families.

This week I shall . . .
do something kind
for each of the family

Questions of Faith

Looking after the elderly - a fable.

The man was carrying his father across the fields to the workhouse. He stopped at a stile to rest and laid his burdensome father against the wood. "Ah," said the father, "this is where I stopped when I was carrying my father to the workhouse."

The younger man picked up his father and carried him back to their home.

We discover, time and again, that parents are treated just as they treated their parents. We see it in the loyalty of family love and we see it, also, in disregard for elderly parents.

Example is the most powerful of teachers. Ecclesiasticus knows.

People of God

Tommie had a fine idea for his children when they were young. On Christmas morning his children had each to choose one of their presents for him to give to families who were poorer than they were. They were not very well off themselves, but they were rich in family love and the sharing of presents was a reflection of that love.

John and Mary will be saying Happy Christmas this year with special gifts. She has bought him a donation to a children's charity and he will be giving her a receipt for his donation to the same children's charity. The family know that Mum and Dad do not wish for presents, only a donation to their favourite charity.

Martin and Biddy have a large and close family. Christmas is always a celebration of their family love, with children and grandchildren travelling long distances to be together. At their Christmas dinner table you will always find an extra place set - for Mary, an elderly widow with no children and no family of her own to share the day with.