



THE LORD'S DAY

1st Sunday of Lent (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

Deuteronomy 26 : 4-10

Deuteronomy is the final (5th) book of the Pentateuch (the Law) and seems to have been written late in the 7th century BC, but its oral traditions are much older.

The imagined setting is Moses' awareness of his approaching death and his gathering the people around him to remind them of the Law he had been given to pass on to them.

Today's reading concerns the offering to God of the first produce of the harvests. Just as the first-born, of the human family and of animals, belongs to God; so, too, the first fruits of the earth belong to the Lord and must be offered.

It is a picturesque ceremony that the reading gives us. The one making the offering makes a prayer, recalling the story of Abraham and the promise of the land and its produce. In the verses that follow we read of the duty of the tithe - offering to God a proportion of one's produce, to be then shared by the Levites, the widows and orphans. The rites are powerful, full of the memory of Abraham, the Exile (slavery), the Promised Land (Moses).

GOD FIRST . . .

Moses urges first fruits to God
Paul unites everyone in Christ
Jesus leads us to choose God.

This week I shall . . .
observe Lent faithfully.

Second Reading

Romans 10 : 8-13

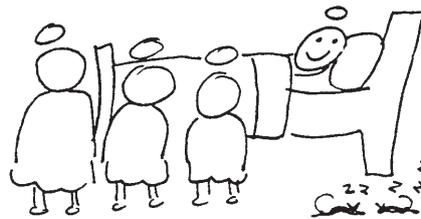
You will sense Paul's sadness. His Jewish people have heard the word from Moses, but not understood. Paul wants his Christians to see that Christ fulfills the life that the Mosaic Law strove to achieve by observances: it is faith in the risen Lord that makes us pleasing to God.

Heart and lips are united in true faith: the Jew coming from the Law that guided belief and the Gentile seeing in Christ the way to God: Jew and Gentile meet in a common profession of Faith - everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Paul is hard on his fellow Jews in the verses that follow today's reading. Their time has gone, the possibility of sharing their belief in God with the world overtaken by the coming of Jesus the Christ who unites the whole human race in the preaching of the Good News.

The risen Christ draws us beyond anything the Law could offer.

Wisdom from the Saints



"Be joyful, brothers and sisters,
and keep the Faith"

said to be St. David's final words

People of God

St. David is the patron saint of Wales. We know little about him because the first known biography was written hundreds of years after his death. He was born early in the 6th century, the son of Sant and Non. As a young man he was ordained a priest, spent several years in a monastery, and then became the founder of a number of monasteries throughout Wales: he truly was the father of Welsh monasticism.

The rule in his monasteries was severe. There was hard manual work for everyone, great silence so that there would be constant prayer, and the only food was bread and vegetables, the drink was water. From Friday evening until dawn on Sunday, in imitation of the death of Jesus, the monks held a vigil of prayer with only an hour or so for sleep.

Yet David's hard life, and the life he imposed upon his monks, do not fit well with the love for his name that Wales has always known. His final words "Be joyful, brothers and sisters, keep the Faith" suggest a gentler man than the rugged monk his admiring biographers chose to write of.

Gospel Reading

Luke 4 : 1-13

Matthew's account (Matthew 4:1-11) of Jesus' temptations is very similar to Luke's, though the order of the second and third temptations is changed. Jesus' fasting seems more severe in Matthew and there are ministering angels - who do not appear in Luke's account.

Matthew and Luke speak of the devil, whereas Mark uses the name Satan - "the adversary". The story of the temptations seems to be an attempt by evil to rule creation: offering the kingdoms of the world to Jesus as a gift - but a gift held under the devil's power.

The period is forty days - God's eternity in human time (the Flood, Moses on Mount Sinai, Elijah's journey to Horeb, days before the Ascension), and the battle is for the world - to belong to a good God or an evil Satan.

The temptations symbolise Israel's failures: grumbling about bread in the wilderness, seeking political alliances in order to obtain worldly power, testing God by constant unfaithfulness. Jesus, the new Israel, is completely faithful.

Questions of Faith

Spirit of Evil

We first meet Satan in the Book of Job. He is a member of the heavenly court who mocks Job's goodness. God allows Satan to inflict suffering on Job so that the good man's patience will be revealed.

The name "Satan" means "accuser" or "adversary", which explains the strange way Jesus speaks to Peter when the apostle disagrees with the Lord: "Get thee behind me, Satan, for the way you think is man's way, not God's". (*Matthew 16:23*)

Whatever opposes God's goodness is evil. In telling a story, as in the Book of Job, it would be natural to personify the evil. We need to be careful of making "the person" real - demons, evil spirits, Beelzebul . . .