



THE LORD'S DAY

33rd Sunday of Year A : 19th November 2017

This weekly newsletter is offered by the Watermead Apostolate as a helpful background to the readings used at the 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

Proverbs 31 : 10-13

Page after page of the Book of Proverbs offers short sayings of wisdom, humour, intelligence, good family and business relations. Browse the book and admire the mind of the editor who has chosen from the wise thoughts of others ("The steady drip from a gutter on a day of rain is like a woman's constant scolding A rich man may think he is wise, but the poor man with intelligence will outwit him").

Eventually you will come to today's reading in the final chapter. Read all the poem, admire the choice of verses the Church has made for today's reading and ask yourself if you would have made the same choices. Notice that the woman is effectively the head of the house. It is a wise husband who loves and grants such a position for his wife.

How good to find such wisdom in the ancient world, where the woman's position was rarely appreciated as one of equality. The poem takes us back to the Book of Genesis and the joy of partnership and equality that the poem (Genesis 1:27) and the story (Genesis 2:23-24) portray.

The lady is kind, intelligent, industrious and of a religious nature. Who is she? She is Wisdom - the consort of God, the feminine with God at the very beginning of creation, delighting to be in the planning and shaping of the world! How blest a man to have a wife like the consort of God . . .

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5 : 1-6

Paul has been writing of the joy to be shared in the Communion of Saints at Christ's second coming, the last day, the day of resurrection (4:13-18). He is lyrical as he dreams of the awe-inspiring vision we shall have of creation, its purpose and fulfilment, our understanding salvation history, our seeing our brothers and sisters of the human race throughout all ages. There seems to be nothing to add to this wonderful picture.

But there is. When will it happen, the Thessalonians want to know. The question is a thud. Paul doesn't know. He couldn't. Not even Jesus of the Gospel knew - only the heavenly Father knows, said Jesus. So Paul gives the perfect answer - "Any time". It allows his eloquence a fresh start. Because the end of the world and the end of one's life (the two become one in today's reading) are unknown, we must be ready at all times. Life is to be lived as though at any moment it might be ended. This may seem a recipe for fear - any time, be on guard - when Paul's intention must have been to portray it as God's love. To live a life of fear because life might end any day might be a lesson enjoyed by dark-minded people, but it is not the Good News of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. There, it is lives of love and service we are invited to share for a God who manifests love and truth in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ.

Paul recovers quickly from the darkness of today's reading and returns to Christian encouragement and faith (vv.9-11,16-18).

Gospel Reading

Matthew 25 : 14-30

Read Luke 19:12-27. Now we have to ask questions about Jesus' original story, or stories, where told and how often, how many times retold in the first Christian community, who settled on these two accounts (or were they always two different stories?) and wonder how they came to Matthew and Luke as they researched material for the Gospel.

It is wise to ask questions as preparation for being asked questions. A child or a seeker after truth will not be impressed by being told not to ask or to ask somebody else. Christian responsibility should delight in poring over the Gospel message and, in the light of God's love, bringing old and new out of the treasure house.

We Christians are the servants in the parable. Each of us is blessed by God with our own talents to make best use of them. (A talent was a weight of silver [usually] or gold, and worth a considerable amount). The servants are left to their own devices - just as we are in our world. Prayer and faith assist us, inspire us to work (trade) for the Lord. We do the work, the Lord working through us, but he does not do the work - we do. Hence the blessing for servants A and B, who doubled what they were given, and the condemnation of servant C who buried his talent.

All three servants would have been paid a wage/salary in their employment, and A and B earn their wage by doubling their talents: but C does nothing and thus cheats his employer. He is condemned.

Wisdom from the Saints



"Wisdom of the eternal Father, enlighten my mind"

John Bradford

IDEALS

Wisdom, the ideal wife;
Paul, an ideal apostle;
Christian, an ideal servant.

This week I shall . . .
appreciate the wisdom of others.

Questions of Faith

The Lord. There are eighteen titles for God in the Bible, reflecting the different ways that God is thought of by the people throughout the history of faith. Today's first reading reminds us of the vision of the Book of Wisdom, of the lovely lady Wisdom at the beginning of creation with God. Lord God of the Old Testament and Lord Jesus of the New Testament are titles that invite us again to explore the feminine in God . . .

What has been revealed to us?

People of God

Grandad was head of the family - no question. The nine children and the many grandchildren all knew it, and loved him as he loved them. The grandchildren slowly learned why he was so loveable and so loving. They learned it from their parents who had learned it in the original family home. On every question where a decision was required mother would tell them to ask their father: he would smile and say: "Ask your mother - she knows best".