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 0844 (0)116 220 7851 / 7880. Download newsletters from www.watermead-apostolate.com. Contact us via our Contact Us Page or our shop website www.watermeadshop.co.uk.

First Reading
Genesis 14 : 18-20

Read the ugly account of desert bandits in 14:1-12 - the ferocity of Abraham’s reaction and pursuit of the bandits, the victory, the release of captives and the sense of peace in the welcome given Abraham by Melchizedek, king of Salem.

Who is he? Priest of God, in (Jeru)salem. He is of David’s future city and is an image of the line of David. Abraham honours him with a tithe (tenth) of all he had brought as booty from the battle, and accepts from him the bread and wine.

Bread and wine in Jerusalem are an image of the Last Supper and the Eucharist . . .

Second Reading
1 Corinthians 11 : 23-26

Paul has been disturbed by news of factions within the Corinthian community. His letter is full of details that he wishes them to accept in order to promote unity. “Whatever you eat or drink, whatever you do, do for God,” he has urged at the end of chapter 10 and a long analysis of idolatry. Now he comes to worship and the Eucharist, explaining how people should behave at prayer gatherings. Men and women are contrasted (vv.2-16) but note the abruptness of verse 16 when Paul seems suddenly to close any discussion. Is this a sign of weak argument?

Then comes a powerful reminder of the reverence due at all Eucharistic gatherings (vv.17-22) and today’s reading - which is the earliest account we have of the Lord’s Supper. It is a revelation to Paul from Jesus, not from the apostles. By recalling this personal revelation Paul wants to shock the community into a realisation of how unworthy their Eucharistic celebrations had become.

Wisdom from the Saints

“The proper effect of the Eucharist is the transformation of humankind into God”
St. Thomas Aquinas

This week I shall pray… before the Blessed Sacrament

People of God
Blessed Juliana of Liege.
The Church celebrates the institution of the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday - part of the beauty of Holy Week - but since the 13th century the feast of Corpus Christi has also celebrated the Sacramental gift.

The story begins with a religious sister, Juliana, who had a vision in which she believed the Lord was encouraging her to introduce such a feast. When she became Prioress in 1230 she consulted Church authorities, including the Archdeacon of Liege who later became Pope Urban IV. Prayers for the Feast were composed in 1246 and the day was observed throughout her diocese. A little later, Pope Urban IV was petitioned to have the Feast observed throughout the Church. He agreed and asked St. Thomas Aquinas to compose the Divine Office prayers for the day. There was delay before the feast was fully established and it was Pope John XXII (1316-1334) who approved the universal celebration of Corpus Christi. The procession in honour of the Blessed Sacrament has been a feature of the feast almost from the beginning. Blessed Juliana’s vision had been fulfilled.

Questions of Faith

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The early Church celebrated the Eucharist (“Thanksgiving”) each week on the Lord’s Day and annually at the tombs of martyrs and confessors. The Sacrament was taken home for the sick and elderly unable to attend, but there was no reservation of the Sacrament during the week - there was no place for such reservation. When freedom came for the community to build its churches the Sacrament was reserved to be brought to the sick and dying during the week, and the place for the reservation was the tabernacle in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel in a quiet part of the church. Such chapels became the natural place for people to go for quiet prayer. Thus the focus for private prayer in a church became the Lord’s sacramental presence in the tabernacle - which commonly became the central feature of the main church.

Central position or Blessed Sacrament Chapel are two aspects of the same reverence: prayer in the sacramental presence of the Lord. This led to the popularity of placing the sacramental host in the monstrance, the lovely devotions of Benediction and of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament at the altar.

PRISTHOOD
The “mystical” Melchizedek: The Mystical Body wounded; The Body of Christ received.

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G O S P E L  R E A D I N G
Luke 9 : 11-17

There are six Gospel accounts of the feeding of a crowd with loaves and fishes, and we wonder that it is Luke’s account that is chosen for today’s feast.

The event takes place near Bethsaida (a name which means “House of the Fishermen”), the place from where Simon Peter, Andrew and Philip came. Before the feeding, Jesus preaches and heals during the heat of the day, and then the apostles suggest that Jesus send the people to buy their own provisions and to find lodgings.

Jesus’ reply is strange and so is theirs - which makes the miracle-story even more dramatic. Except for “Raising his eyes to heaven (neither Mark nor Matthew say this)” Jesus does what he does in Luke’s account of the Last Supper. The feeding of the crowd thus becomes an image of the Last Supper and the celebration of the Eucharist.