

SUNDAY PLUS



Overworked and underpaid?

A Year of the Word

Work with a different flavour



by Phil Ferguson

He stood in the Victoria and Albert Museum in front of a large wooden carving of the crucifixion, tears streaming down his face. Concerned for the stranger, Katie approached him and asked if he was alright. "I'm sorry", he replied. "I'm a woodcarver and I've just seen this for the first time. I couldn't help myself. I was so moved that the tears just started. It's so beautiful and there is so much work in it."

Katie was intrigued. Obviously, the woodcarver could see much more deeply into

his own craft than she could ever hope to appreciate. "How long would it take to make this?" she asked. "I don't know," he replied. "It would take me at least six months, working for several hours each day."

Work takes on a whole different flavour when you are working on something or for someone you love. Few people enthuse about the moments spent in washing dishes or sorting out the wheelie bins. Yet they might spend countless hours digging the garden, arranging flowers or preparing a meal and think nothing of it. Yes, it's hard work but not oppressive and it's a

different sort of tiredness at the end of the day.

Jesus invited us to go to him when we feel overburdened with care and perhaps joyless. Few people can make a career out of their hobby. Some people have very boring jobs, perhaps fulfilling menial tasks which the rest of us escape. May God bless them and help them to smile through their work.

Phil Ferguson is a former teacher.

Make space

by Siân Owen-Owen

A sixth form college car park attendant watched as a youngster parked his vehicle. "They're poor little rich kids. They've all got their own cars, some of them very expensive. Their parents spend a small fortune, overloading those kids with everything they could materially want. They have money I couldn't have imagined when I was their age – but their parents are too busy to give their children time and attention. They think that splashing the cash will keep them happy, but it's not enough. Those kids need real love."

St Teresa of Calcutta declared, "If you want to change the world, go home and love your family." In time to come, children won't thank you for impressive company profits, but they will never forget a few words of genuine praise and encouragement. They will always

remember those few minutes of family fun and laughter.

The best families are those in which everybody makes space for each other.

Siân Owen-Owen is the eldest of eight children and proudly boasts that her brothers and sisters have always been her "best friends".

Loving Lord, I've often felt overburdened and unappreciated for all that I've done. Help me, Lord, to give without counting the cost. Be with those people who really are overworked and underpaid. Let them find justice, compassion and understanding.

✚ Amen.

"Too often the effects of a life worn down by precarious and underpaid work, unsustainable hours, bad transport rebound on the children... Children also pay the price for immature unions and irresponsible separations: they are the first victims; they suffer the outcome of a culture of exaggerated individual rights, and then the children become more precocious. They often absorb the violence they are not able to 'ward off'."

Pope Francis

Make time

by Michael George

One of the topics I most enjoy teaching involves learning to draw with perspective. Over the course of a series of lessons children learn that they can transform their drawings of a room or a landscape from flat two-dimensional images to vibrant and realistic three-dimensional spaces. It is exciting learning.

In today's Gospel, Jesus instructs us with imperative language: "Come to me," and "Take my yoke". Unequivocally,

Jesus promises to help us with our burdens. He promises us the gift of time and space. This gift is to enable us to experience the Spirit working within us. The Spirit is always there, but only in the rest and peace given by Jesus can we feel the Spirit's power and be guided by the Spirit's light. The rest Jesus promises gives us that same complete, realistic three-dimensional perspective as children with their drawings – to see ourselves as we fully are.

Following more than twenty years as a teacher and headteacher, Michael George has recently started work as a lay school chaplain.

Today:
Zechariah 9:9-10
Romans 8:9, 11-13
Matthew 11:25-30

Monday:
Hosea 2:16-18, 21-22
Matthew 9:18-26

Tuesday:
Hosea 8:4-7, 11-13
Matthew 9:32-38

Wednesday:
Hosea 10:1-3, 7-8, 12
Matthew 10:1-7

Thursday:
Hosea 11:1-4, 8-9
Matthew 10:7-15

Friday:
Hosea 14:2-10
Matthew 10:16-23

Saturday:
Isaiah 6:1-8
Matthew 10:24-33

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 55:10-11
Romans 8:18-23
Matthew 13:1-23

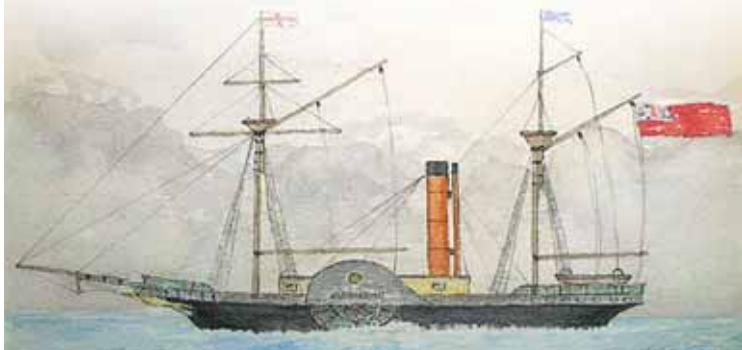
SUNDAY PLUS



“Who hath desired the Sea?”

A Year of the Word

A heroine of the seas



Image/ 19th century folk art watercolour of SS Forfarshire/ wikimedia commons.

by Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

Just below the Scottish border lie a group of low islands, called the Farne Islands. These islands were once home to ascetic Christian monks who favoured remote islands for quiet and meditation. St Cuthbert, patron saint of Northumbria, retreated there after his missionary work in the seventh century. The outermost islands were always shipping hazards, especially during storms. Rising at dawn on 7 September 1838, Grace Darling, daughter of the lighthouse keeper, looked out of her window at a howling gale and saw a wreck on a low rocky island about 600 yards away. The ship was a paddle steamer, the Forfarshire.

The storm snapped the boat in two, taking many people with it. The surviving passengers eventually struggled onto the rocks of the island. This was the sight that Grace, twenty-three years old, saw

that stormy morning. She counted thirteen people huddled on the rocks. Running to her father, she begged him to take out their boat and rescue them. At first he said the seas were too rough to venture out with just the two of them. After further pleading he agreed. By the time they arrived only nine people were left – the sea had swept away four of the original survivors.

It was an extraordinary act of bravery, where two people risked their lives to rescue strangers in danger. Grace's compulsion to save others was a stronger instinct than her own safety and survival. In her own way she reflects the commitment and tenacity of Jesus. Today we pray for all those brave women and men who risk their lives to save others at sea.

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk.

Wave wonder

by Mary Bell

As people grow old many yearn to live by the sea. Perhaps it is a harking back to childhood holidays on sandy shores or perhaps there is a fundamental pull exerted in us all from primeval longings. Whatever the case, just gazing at the sea can be mesmerising; experiencing its moods – the sparkling sunlit waves or the tempestuous hurling on rocks and wondrous foam shooting skywards.

Our faith is like that: sometimes broad and strong like the tide at high water, at others receding in pools of doubt and pebbly stretches of sharp recriminations “How could God let that happen?”

Most of the time we probably take them for granted – our faith and the sea – just there, twinkling and heaving, now this way, now that, until we are confronted by the realisation, as St Paul says, that there is somewhere even more glorious awaiting us. This is truly our faith.

Mary Bell is a retired teacher, U3A lecturer and devoted grandmother.

Start with the children

by Rachel Thompson

I was mortified to be greeted by, “I’ll be in at 9 o’clock to complain!”, as I arrived at school at 4 am. Unfortunately, while waiting for the coach to London, our noisily overexcited CAFOD group had woken children in a neighbouring house.

We had been preparing for weeks for our trip to join the mass lobby of Parliament with The Climate Coalition. Young people clearly recognise our climate crisis. They are horrified by the damage to wildlife in oceans choking in plastic. They see the poorest communities already suffering from the effects of global warming and want to stop this injustice. The seed has fallen on good soil. They have heard and understood that faith

in a God of love demands action on behalf of the voiceless.

As I think back to the lobby now, however, I wonder if our message has been heard loudly enough. Perhaps we should all be encouraging even more noise.

Whilst working as Redemptorist Publications' Children's Editor, Rachel Thompson is also a secondary school teacher, wife and mum.

Lord of life and love, be with all seafarers and bring them home safely to their families. Please also watch over and protect lifeboat crews, lifeguards and all those who devote their time and energy to keeping people safe. 🙏 Amen.

Pope Francis

Today:
Isaiah 55:10-11
Romans 8:18-23
Matthew 13:1-23

Monday:
Isaiah 1:10-17
Matthew 10:34 – 11:1

Tuesday:
Isaiah 7:1-9
Matthew 11:20-24

Wednesday:
Isaiah 10:5-7, 13-16
Matthew 11:25-27

Thursday:
Isaiah 26:7-9, 12, 16-19
Matthew 11:28-30

Friday:
Isaiah 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8
Matthew 12:1-8

Saturday:
Micah 2:1-5
Matthew 12:14-21

Next Sunday:
Wisdom 12:13, 16-19
Romans 8:26-27
Matthew 13:24-43

SUNDAY PLUS



Yeast rising

A Year of the Word

If we are the yeast...

by Claire Wright

Muriel Rukeyser's quote: "the universe is made of stories, not atoms" always rings true. We are storytellers, passing down wisdom and tales from generation to generation. Jesus was a storyteller. In fact, we hear in today's Gospel that "he would never speak to them except in parables".

So I'm always surprised by how short the parable of the yeast is. A woman makes leavened bread – and it's like the kingdom of heaven? But perhaps there is beauty in the brevity. It allows for interpretation, for chewing over. My favourite explanation is about

how the leavening of the bread is an explanation of how we, as Christians, are to help bring about the kingdom of heaven on Earth.

If we are the yeast, then we are to shape and form the culture. We are to be in the world but not of the world, becoming the rising agent that lives out the Gospel to lift those around us to God. Without yeast, bread lacks texture, lightness, shape. Without us as Christians, the glory of God dims in the culture around us.

I call that a pretty good loaf of bread, don't you?

Claire Wright is a Brighton-based freelance writer who runs a faith blog and a healthy family food website, all while taking care of two lively toddlers.



Mighty oaks...

by Mary Bell

Every success story has to have a beginning and it is very often something small.

One of my favourites is that of the founding of Amnesty International. Peter Benenson's initial realisation that all over the world there were people in prison without trial merely for their beliefs, languishing forgotten, without hope, led to the simple expedient of sending letters and cards to these people thereby raising the awareness of the authorities to the fact that their plight was known

further afield. As a result hundreds of prisoners of conscience have been released over the years.

Rosa Parks, a black woman in Montgomery, Alabama, refused to give up her seat on the bus when there were no empty seats for white people. The resulting bus-boycott helped to trigger the movement which eventually resulted in greater justice for black people in America.

From such small and unpromising beginnings mighty political forces have been mobilised to bring about a better life for many.

Mary Bell is a retired teacher, U3A lecturer and devoted grandmother.

"When there were no refrigerators, to preserve the *mother dough* of the bread, they gave a small amount of their own leavened dough to a neighbour, and when they needed to make bread again they received a handful of leavened dough from that woman or from another who had received it in her turn. It is reciprocity."

Pope Francis

Unseen growth

by Gerlinde Symons

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus invites us to look at ordinary, everyday life making bread – and see the presence of God beneath the surface. He encourages us to look for the Kingdom of God in the most unexpected places and teaches us that the sacred can be found in everyday life.

In my work as a prison chaplain I have found that the Kingdom of God is alive and active. The media today would have us believe that prisons are full of bad people but it is my experience that many men and women in prison have had a genuine change of heart and mind. They develop a deep desire to follow Jesus, who was in complete solidarity with the outcasts of society, always challenging people's preconceptions of where goodness can be found.

The Kingdom of God can be revealed in our daily struggles. Rather than wanting to change a painful situation, we can let it change us by allowing God to heal us and draw us closer.

Gerlinde Symons is a Catholic lay prison chaplain at two UK prisons.

Lord, it's not easy to make good bread: so many things can go wrong with it that, when it comes out of the oven, it can be inedible. Sometimes I just don't have the patience to wait for results and yet, if the baker doesn't wait for the dough to rise, the bread is a disaster. Give me patience. Teach me understanding. Help me to share what I have with others.
✚ Amen.

Christian Playfulness

Peter Morris

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Fr Peter uses a combination of personal testimony, and the inspiration of generations of men and women of faith, to show why he believes playfulness and a good sense of humour are not only allowable, but are vital for a spiritual life that is alive, fulfilling and inspiring for others.

Today:
Wisdom 12:13. 16-19
Romans 8:26-27
Matthew 13:24-43

Monday:
Micah 6:1-4. 6-8
Matthew 12:38-42

Tuesday:
Micah 7:14-15. 18-20
Matthew 12:46-50

Wednesday:
Song of Songs 3:1-4
John 20:1-2. 11-18

Thursday:
Jeremiah 2:1-3. 7-8. 12-13
Matthew 13:10-17

Friday:
Jeremiah 3:14-17
Matthew 13:18-23

Saturday:
2 Corinthians 4:7-15
Matthew 20:20-28

Next Sunday:
1 Kings 3:5. 7-12
Romans 8:28-30
Matthew 13:44-52

SUNDAY PLUS

Worth everything!

A Year of the Word

The authentic article



by Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

In two parables in today's Gospel, the men appreciate the true value of what they have discovered and are willing to pay the cost of everything they have for the new treasure. To outsiders looking at them, the two men might appear totally unhinged in risking everything on this one venture. But both are certain about the wisdom of what they must do; for them, the folly would be in passing over the main chance.

In the parables Jesus is asking the crowds if they perceive the kingdom of God in the same way: do they really see it as a treasure that is worth more than everything they now value in life? If the kingdom of God is not perceived as the authentic article, people will not bother renouncing anything to attain it.

None of us can gain anything of value without renouncing something. Perhaps what we have to renounce first is our perception of what real treasure in this life really is. Few of us will chance on the crock of gold at the end of the rainbow, or win a lottery, or stumble on an oilfield in the backyard. But we have all stumbled on treasure. The real treasure of life is under our noses – in the people with whom we share life; in the opportunities we face every day to exercise the values of Jesus. None of this might appear a glittering prize but it is in the heart of the ordinary that we discover the presence of Jesus. He is the authentic article. He is hidden in the commonplace, hoping that we'll stumble on that truth before long.

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk.

Priceless opportunities

by Daniel Kearney

Nothing seems to last. We tire easily, always looking for the next best thing. But our restlessness is not the restlessness of which St Augustine talks, ultimately finding its peace in God. It is more superficial, less fulfilling. It continually turns us away from what we possess, setting our sights on what we don't. It undermines our stability in all things by creating a sense of being dissatisfied with everything. This is an illusion, but it is difficult to resist its lure because society is repeatedly telling us that "more" is better and that "more" is what we need to be fulfilled. Such thinking can seriously damage our health. Sometimes we need to take stock of what we have and, as the saying goes, count our blessings, because it is often the case that the priceless opportunities which we

think are "out there", are, in fact, already within our grasp.

Daniel Kearney is the author of *Adult Bullying and Childhood Bullying: caring for yourself and others*, available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk.

Loving Lord, how often do I count my blessings? What is most precious to me? What could I not live without? What is so important to me that I would willingly give up everything – even my life – to protect and defend it? Lord, if you are my dearest treasure, everything else falls into place: all those whom I love, everything I say, think and do. My Lord and my God, I love you. ☪ Amen.

Head over heels in love

by Emerald O'Hanrahan

Newly married, my husband and I arrived at St Peter's, for a blessing from Pope Francis.

When he reached us, he congratulated us and asked us to pray for him saying that he needed our prayers. He took our hands and blessed our new wedding rings and our marriage.

In all the pomp and ceremony of the Vatican, with all the guards and security, the sharp suits, glamour and riches, Pope Francis walked small: a man serving. A Jesuit. His humble walking through the world, responding to each person clamouring to see him as if they were the only ones, completely without ego – what an extraordinary model of discipleship! As newlyweds, there was no better gift: a model of humility, presence,

of love in action. Whenever I look at my wedding ring, I think not only of the best day of my life, when my husband put this symbol on my hand and we became a sacrament together, but of the humble loving presence of Pope Francis and his blessing on us both.

Emerald O'Hanrahan, actor and voice-over artist, is best known as Emma Grundy in the long-running BBC radio series, *The Archers*.

"Guard the treasure that God has given us in the Gospel. The best means to guard it is God's grace. So I ask you to keep praying, for his grace to come and enable you to guard this treasure. Let us continue, then, to let others see this treasure which God freely gave us and which we must freely offer to others."

Pope Francis

Today:
1 Kings 3:5, 7-12
Romans 8:28-30
Matthew 13:44-52

Monday:
Jeremiah 13:1-11
Matthew 13:31-35

Tuesday:
Jeremiah 14:17-22
Matthew 13:36-43

Wednesday:
1 John 4:7-16
John 11:19-27
or Luke 10:38-42

Thursday:
Jeremiah 18:1-6
Matthew 13:47-53

Friday:
Jeremiah 26:1-9
Matthew 13:54-58

Saturday:
Jeremiah 26:11-16, 24
Matthew 14:1-12

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 55:1-3
Romans 8:35, 37-39
Matthew 14:13-21