

SUNDAY PLUS

With the eyes of a child...



Beginning together

by Fr Denis
McBride C.Ss.R.

Every great religion has sacred stories which account for the beginning of creation and the human race. The book of Genesis has two stories of creation,


the second of which we hear in today's first reading. God fashions man of dust from the soil and then breathes into his nostrils a breath of life. God's breath is man's life. When God plants a garden amidst the wasteland, this garden becomes man's first address. He inhabits a beautiful place in Eden, but the wasteland still surrounds his domain.

The man God creates is the human race; he embodies in his person the whole of humanity. He is not one human being among many; he is the Human. To relieve man's aloneness, God begins work at creating a helper. Then there is the striking and comical image of God creating all the beasts and the birds which he brings to man to see if he will name any of them "helper". There is a long procession of candidates for the post: man gives names to them all, but none is named helper. After the interviews, man is still alone.

Clearly, God must think again.

So the Lord makes the man fall into a deep sleep and then takes something from him. What is taken is enclosed in flesh to become a new creature, a woman. The original man makes two creatures: an individual man and an individual woman. When God brings the woman to the man, this time there is great relief and success as the man exclaims, "At last!"

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

Loving Lord, you have the answers to my questions. Help me to listen and to take you seriously.  Amen.

God in the family

by Lucy Russell

Edgar is twelve and almost six feet tall. His is the box room in our 1930s semi. Although he has his own space for sleeping and other activities, he must hang his school uniform in James' wardrobe. Moving home during the pandemic wasn't a prospect we relished, but it was obvious that we needed to try and do it.

James was at home self-isolating the second time the house sale fell through, so it was impossible to keep the details of the phone call from him. "If it's meant to be, it will still happen. Leave it to Jesus. Maybe the house we want will still be available when we have sold our house, and if it's not, then God will have a better one lined up."

I should have been telling him that, but he was telling me, while he made me a cup of tea.

Dr Lucy Russell is the author of *Who Do You Say You Are?*, available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk.

Feast of the week
Monday 4 October

St Francis of Assisi
(1181-1226)

One day, when St Francis was travelling with Friar Masseo, one of his earliest followers, they arrived at a crossroads where three roads met, leading to Florence, Siena and Arezzo. Masseo asked: "Father, which way should we go?" St Francis replied: "By whichever road is God's will for us to take". Puzzled, Masseo asked Francis how they might know the will of God as they stood at a road junction in the midst of the Italian countryside.

To Masseo's amazement, Francis instructed him to twirl around on the spot, as children do, and to continue until Francis should tell him to stop.

Masseo obediently began to spin himself round, becoming so dizzy that he fell several times – but Francis still didn't tell him to stop.

Eventually Francis told the (now nauseous) friar to stand still and asked him in which direction he was facing. Masseo replied: "Toward Siena". St Francis said: "That is the road God wants us to take."

Adapted from The Little Flowers of St Francis

"Jesus has no house, because his house is the people; it is we who are his dwelling place; his mission is to open God's doors to all, to be the presence of God's love."

Pope Francis

Today:
Genesis 2:18-24
Hebrews 2:9-11
Mark 10:2-16

Monday:
Jonah 1:1 – 2:1. 11
Luke 10:25-37

Tuesday:
Jonah 3:1-10
Luke 10:38-42

Wednesday:
Jonah 4:1-11
Luke 11:1-4

Thursday:
Malachi 3:13-20
Luke 11:5-13

Friday:
Joel 1:13-15; 2:1-2
Luke 11:15-26

Saturday:
Joel 4:12-21
Luke 11:27-28

Next Sunday:
Wisdom 7:7-11
Hebrews 4:12-13
Mark 10:17-30


SUNDAY PLUS

Follow me



It is
hard
to be
good!

by Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

Loving Lord, be close to those in prison and to their families for whom life can become extremely painful. Watch over and support all those who are imprisoned within their own hearts and life situations, that they will find the freedom for which they long.  Amen.

Jesus needs YOU!

by "a prison visitor"

Three-quarters of prison inmates cannot read, write or count to the standard expected of an 11-year-old. They depend on someone else to write letters on their behalf or to read out the messages from their families and friends.

The reoffending rate drops by 80 per cent if the person leaves prison and goes straight into a job. How many return to crime because illiteracy limits their employment possibilities, so that, once again amongst the "bored-on-benefits", there's little hope of a hopeful, challenging future?

Catholic education has a wonderful tradition of

helping children to reach for the stars even if the star for which they are reaching is as simple as being able to recite the alphabet or count to ten. Teachers in Catholic schools have made a name for themselves because of their preparedness to go the extra mile on behalf of their pupils.

Some people are illiterate because their families had never learned to read and write, but how many only needed a Good Samaritan?

Fact really can be stranger than fiction. As the burglar left the crime scene, he forgot to carry away his holdall containing a couple of letters bearing his name and address. Unsurprisingly, he soon found himself with a court appearance and jail sentence.

Another strange but true story involved a man who stole a wooden bench from outside a pub. Finding it too heavy to carry, he dragged the seat home – and the police officer merely followed the trail through the grass and down the muddy lane...

"Mr Big" often escapes paying the penalty of his crimes. It's the small fry who are caught out, often through their own blunders.

The rich young man in today's Gospel tried hard to live a virtuous life and wanted to do more than the bare minimum

required to reach heaven. Perhaps he hoped that Jesus would tell him to give a hefty donation to the poor people in the neighbourhood or to offer a bullock rather than a goat as a sin offering in the Temple sacrifice – but to give up everything. Did Jesus really mean that? Surely not!

It is hard to be anonymously good! Too often, we want to do the right thing but also want other people to know just how hard we are trying. The small donations receive less publicity than the philanthropic millions which can bring about real changes in society – but Jesus praised the elderly widow who, in her poverty, gave more than she could afford. He pitied the rich young man who kept hold of his fortune.

Where do I stand?

Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.

Feast of the week
Friday 15 October

St Teresa of Avila

(1515-1582)

"We had to run many dangers. At no part of the road were the risks greater than within a few leagues of Burgos, at a place called Los Pontes. The rivers were so high that the water in places covered everything, neither road nor the smallest footpath could be seen: only water everywhere, and two abysses on each side. It seemed foolhardiness to advance, especially in a carriage, for if one strayed ever

so little off the road (then invisible), one must have perished."

Teresa led her frightened companions across the swollen river on foot. The current was so strong that she slipped, and was almost carried away. "Oh, my Lord!" she exclaimed, "When will you stop scattering obstacles in our path?" "Do not complain, daughter," the Divine Master answered, "for this is how I treat my friends." "Ah, Lord, it is also on that account that you have so few!" Teresa replied.

Adapted from The Life of Saint Teresa: taken from the French of A Carmelite Nun

"You cannot talk about paying a debt to society from a jail cell without windows. There is no humane punishment without a horizon. No one can change their life if they don't see a horizon. And so many times we are used to blocking the view of our inmates."

Pope Francis

Today:
Wisdom 7:7-11
Hebrews 4:12-13
Mark 10:17-30

Monday:
Romans 1:1-7
Luke 11:29-32

Tuesday:
Romans 1:16-25
Luke 11:37-41

Wednesday:
Romans 2:1-11
Luke 11:42-46

Thursday:
Romans 3:21-30
Luke 11:47-54

Friday:
Romans 4:1-8
Luke 12:1-7

Saturday:
Romans 4:13, 16-18
Luke 12:8-12

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 53:10-11
Hebrews 4:14-16
Mark 10:35-45

SUNDAY PLUS

To serve and not be served

Power and service



by Fr Denis McBride
C.Ss.R.

In today's Gospel Jesus shares his model for religious authority and contrasts it with pagan rulers who lord it over others and make their authority felt. Jesus' command to his followers is unambiguous: "This is not to happen among you." Before anything else is said, his

followers must not imitate those whose standard of greatness is how much power and control they have over people. That has nothing to do with the Gospel.

Jesus' image of authority is the one who is servant of all. If there is primacy in his community, it is a primacy of service. We all know people whose image of service is indistinguishable from fascism, whose insecurity makes them lord it over others, to make sure that their

authority is keenly felt. As someone who fled when people wanted him as their king, Jesus is suspicious of people who need to arrange their own enthronement.

Jesus does himself what he asks others to do: to serve, not to be served; to give love freely, not to exact everyone's worship; to reach out to those in need, not to wait for adoring approval. Christian discipleship is a service industry in which there should be

no unemployment. There is work for everyone. And as we become more aware of the giftedness of all God's people, we see many new ministries arising in the Church. This should continue, until all Christians feel that their service is not only called for: it is actually wanted in the Church. When that happens, we shall be a serving people.

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

"Love is always at the service of others. Because love is seen in actions, not words."

Pope Francis

Friendship's gift

by Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

And let your best be for your friend.
If he must know the ebb of your tide,
let him know its flood also.
For what is your friend that you should seek him
with hours to kill?
Seek him always with hours to live.
For it is his to fill your need,
but not your emptiness.
And in the sweetness of friendship
let there be laughter and sharing of pleasures.
For in the dew of little things
the heart finds its morning and is refreshed.

Feast of the week
Monday 18 October


St Luke

"In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33-34), Jesus shows us the practical approach required in caring for our suffering neighbour. First, the Samaritan 'sees'. He notices and 'is moved with compassion' at the sight of a person left stripped and wounded along the way. This compassion is much more than mere pity or sorrow; it shows a readiness to become personally involved in the other's situation. Even if we can never equal God's

own compassion, which fills and renews the heart by its presence, nonetheless we can imitate that compassion by 'drawing near', 'binding wounds', 'lifting up' and 'caring for' our neighbour.

A healthcare organization that is efficient and capable of addressing inequalities cannot forget that its *raison d'être*, which is compassion: the compassion of doctors, nurses, support staff, volunteers and all those who are thus able to minimize the pain associated with loneliness and anxiety."

Pope Francis

Lord, it's all very well to ask us to serve others and in theory, it's what I'd like to do. My problem is that sometimes serving others makes me feel like an unappreciated drudge and I'd like a word of thanks. Teach me to serve as you did: without counting the cost.  Amen.

Today:
Isaiah 53:10-11
Hebrews 4:14-16
Mark 10:35-45

Monday:
2 Timothy 4:10-17
Luke 10:1-9

Tuesday:
Romans 5:12, 15, 17-21
Luke 12:35-38

Wednesday:
Romans 6:12-18
Luke 12:39-48

Thursday:
Romans 6:19-23
Luke 12:49-53

Friday:
Romans 7:18-25
Luke 12:54-59

Saturday:
Romans 8:1-11
Luke 13:1-9

Next Sunday:
Jeremiah 31:7-9
Hebrews 5:1-6
Mark 10:46-52

SUNDAY PLUS

Reach out in faith



Lord, that I might see!

by Paul Higginson

In the Gospel today we hear how the blind man Bartimaeus reaches out in faith. In spite of, or because of, his personal darkness, he believes and hopes in Jesus, the Light of the World.

His disability has not caused him to lose faith; he clearly knows who Jesus is, and when he hears him passing by, he shouts loudly, "Jesus, have pity on me!" In this cry we hear our own voice and the echo of many of those who are suffering in the world.


We often grope our way through life, eyes half closed. We can sometimes be blind to the pain of those around us. We often fail to see what is in our own best interests, or what it is that will give us lasting joy and happiness. We

can stumble through life, never really knowing what we are doing, or where we are going. Let us open our eyes and our heart to the possibilities that Jesus holds out to us. Life is not just what we can see.

Jesus heals him. But then the Gospel tells us that Bartimaeus got up and followed Jesus along the road. Jesus doesn't just return his sight – he then gives him a purpose, by letting him see the Christ-light. Bartimaeus knows what his mission is now: to become a disciple of Christ. That same invitation is offered to us too – if we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear.

After many years in the classroom and working as a parish catechist, Paul Higginson is discovering that retirement has given him even more opportunities to support his parish.

Image: Jesus heals blind Bartimaeus, stained glass window in St Mary Abbot's Church, Kensington, London. Renata Sedmakova / Shutterstock.com

Lord of hope, there have been so many occasions when I've been grateful for all the wonderful things that I have seen and heard during my life. Teach me to also thank you for the treasures you have given me through the eyes and ears of my heart.  Amen.

A parable of a harp

King Saul had a very beautiful harp that stood in one corner in the palace. Many musicians had tried to play it and had failed.

One day, the boy David approached Saul and asked if he could attempt to play the harp. Saul laughed derisively. "The finest musicians have made the same request. Do you honestly think that you can succeed where they could not?"

David gently ran his fingers over the harp strings. Suddenly the instrument laughed and cried. It sang of running streams and sighing breezes, bird song and mountaintops. The music was so beautiful that Saul and his courtiers were reduced to tears.

"Is this a miracle? How could you bring forth such exquisite music from this harp?" Saul whispered, his voice still caught up in the depths of his emotional experience.

Feast of the week Thursday 28 October

Ss Simon and Jude

St Jude, an apostle and possibly a nephew of St Joseph, and a cousin of Our Lady, was also known as Jude Thaddeus to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus.

The story goes that an artist, a messenger of King Agbar of Edessa, asked Jesus if he could draw his portrait, saying that Agbar had leprosy, then an incurable disease. The king thought that

if he could even see a picture of Jesus he would be cured. It was a big ask.

Jesus, impressed by Agbar's faith, pressed a cloth upon his face and instructed Jude to take it to him. When the king unrolled the cloth, he saw an imprint of Jesus' face and was instantly healed of his leprosy.

That is why, over the course of centuries, Jude has been portrayed as carrying a picture of Jesus and associated with hopeless cases and lost causes: what might seem impossible to human beings is not impossible to God.

David looked at him. "Your Majesty, the musicians all tried to play their music upon this instrument. That is why they failed. I merely asked the strings to play their own tunes. That is why I succeeded."

"The mission of the Christian in the world is a mission for all, a mission of service, which excludes no-one; it requires great generosity and in particular the gaze and heart turned heavenward to invoke the Lord's help. There is so much need for Christians who bear witness to the Gospel with joy in everyday life."

Pope Francis

Today:
Jeremiah 31:7-9
Hebrews 5:1-6
Mark 10:46-52

Monday:
Romans 8:12-17
Luke 13:10-17

Tuesday:
Romans 8:18-25
Luke 13:18-21

Wednesday:
Romans 8:26-30
Luke 13:22-30

Thursday:
Ephesians 2:19-22
Luke 6:12-19

Friday:
Romans 9:1-5
Luke 14:1-6

Saturday:
Romans 11:1-2, 11-12, 25-29
Luke 14:1, 7-11

Next Sunday:
Apocalypse 7:2-4, 9-14
1 John 3:1-3
Matthew 5:1-12

SUNDAY PLUS

Love wholeheartedly

Costly discipleship

by Fr Maurice
O'Mahony C.Ss.R.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Christian martyr of the twentieth century. A German Lutheran pastor, he strongly opposed the rise of National Socialism (Nazism) in Germany in the 1930s. His opposition to Nazism ended in his execution in Flossenbürg prison on 6 April 1945.

In his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, he wrote: "When Christ calls you to follow, he calls you to come and die!" Yes, he was echoing Jesus' words in the Gospel, yet the statement is

stark and unambiguous. "The one who wishes to follow me", Jesus declares, "must first take up the cross". Bonhoeffer describes discipleship as "costly grace", which he certainly lived and died.

"Discipleship" describes the positive response to Jesus' invitation, to come and follow. Pope St John Paul II defined discipleship as "holding fast to the person of Christ". Discipleship is not passive. It means choosing to draw close to Jesus in daily prayer and worship, and to choose to live and proclaim Gospel values.

Discipleship is not exclusive. Jesus' call is to everyone in every time and place. Those who seek the good, the

truth, acting justly, with integrity, are with Jesus not against him. There are no part-timers or zero-hours contracts. The personal cost is not less than everything.

Yet the cost is balanced with the profound joy that the discipleship which takes us to the cross, ultimately leads to the resurrection.

So don't just stand forever on the touchline, wondering what to do. He is calling you. So, take that first step and join him.

Fr Maurice P. O'Mahony is a Redemptorist priest of the London Province. Over forty years of priesthood he has worked in a variety of apostolates and is currently developing Redemptorist Lay Ministry.



"Worshipping the Lord means giving him the place that he must have; worshipping the Lord means stating, believing... that he alone truly guides our lives; worshipping the Lord means that we are convinced before him that he is the only God, the God of our lives, the God of our history."

Pope Francis

Everyday saints

by Phil Ferguson

A jogger sat beside the lake, balancing his bowl of cereal on his knees. What a beautiful way to eat breakfast! Hurrying to work, I wondered why I'd never thought of doing something similar.

It's easy to dance to the music of society at large, perhaps joining the early morning rush hour instead of enjoying Creation. Saints challenge us to see life differently.

Returning home from work, a stranger stopped me. "Just take a look at this flower," she said. "Isn't it beautiful?" It was! We spent the next few minutes talking about a flower that neither of us could identify, growing on a roadside bush.

Feast of the week
Tuesday 2 November

All Souls

"Hope is a little like leaven that expands our souls. There are difficult moments in life, but with hope the soul goes forward and looks ahead to what awaits us.

Today is a day of hope. Our brothers and sisters are in the presence of God and we shall also be there, through the pure grace of the Lord, if we walk along the way of Jesus...

Hope also purifies us, it lightens us; this purification in hope in Jesus Christ makes us go in haste, readily.

Today before evening falls each one of us can think of the twilight of life: 'What

will my passing away be like?' All of us will experience sundown, all of us! Do we look at it with hope? Do we look with that joy at being welcomed by the Lord? This is a Christian thought that gives us hope.

Today is a day of joy; however, it is serene and tranquil joy, a peaceful joy. Let us think about the passing away of so many of our brothers and sisters who have preceded us, let us think about the evening of our life, when it will come. And let us think about our hearts and ask ourselves: 'Where is my heart anchored?' If it is not firmly anchored, let us anchor it beyond, on that shore, knowing that hope does not disappoint because the Lord Jesus does not disappoint."

Pope Francis

Until she invited me to dance in time to her music, I had been in a hurry – and for what? Admiring that flower was more valuable than arriving home those few minutes earlier.

"A saint is someone who kept on trying when everyone else gave up." How many everyday saints have challenged me to look at the real meaning of life?

Phil Ferguson is a former teacher.

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit,
That my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
That my work, too, may be holy...
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,
That I always may be holy.

St Augustine

Today:
Apocalypse 7:2-4, 9-14
1 John 3:1-3
Matthew 5:1-12

(S,I): Deuteronomy
6:2-6
Hebrews 7:23-28
Mark 12:28-34

Monday:
Romans
11:29-36
Luke 14:12-14

(S,I): Apocalypse
7:2-4, 9-14
1 John 3:1-3
Matthew 5:1-12

Tuesday:
Isaiah 25:6-9
Romans 5:5-11
Mark 15:33-39; 16:1-6

Wednesday:
Romans
13:8-10
Luke 14:25-33

Thursday:
Romans
14:7-12
Luke 15:1-10

Friday:
Romans
15:14-21
Luke 16:1-8

Saturday:
Romans 16:3-9, 16, 22-27
Luke 16:9-15

(I): All the Saints
of Ireland (Feast):
Ecclesiasticus
44:1-15
Luke 6:17-23

Next Sunday:
1 Kings 17:10-16
Hebrews 9:24-28
Mark 12:38-44