

# SUNDAY PLUS

Think for yourself

## No one deserves mercy



"I know he doesn't deserve mercy," the mother answered. "It wouldn't be mercy if he deserved it."

That is the point about mercy: nobody deserves it. Everyone deserves true justice; mercy, on the other hand, is sheer gift. Mercy cancels out wrongs and transgressions – not because a sparkling defence has been found, but because that is the free response of the person who is grieved. Mercy does not suggest that the guilty are not guilty; it recognises the guilt but does not demand satisfaction for the wrong.

You see that beautifully illustrated in the Gospel where Jesus shows mercy to the woman caught in adultery. The challenge of the Gospel is whether we can see ourselves, not as the woman who is caught in adultery, but as the man who is caught up in forgiveness. Can we forgive as readily as Jesus forgives? Or do we dote on people's wrongdoing, reminding them of past failures and lighting vigil lamps to their mistakes? Can we show mercy and leave it?

*Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications, [www.rpbooks.co.uk](http://www.rpbooks.co.uk).*

By Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

The story is told of a young French soldier who deserted Napoleon's army but who, within a matter of hours, was caught by his own troops. To discourage soldiers from

abandoning their posts the penalty for desertion was death. The young soldier's mother heard what had happened and went to plead with Napoleon to spare the life of her son. Napoleon heard her plea but pointed out that because of the serious nature of the crime her son had committed he clearly did not deserve mercy.

## Prayer to communicate by encounter

Lord, teach us to move beyond ourselves, and to set out in search of truth.

Teach us to go out and see, teach us to listen, not to entertain prejudices or draw hasty conclusions.

Teach us to go where no one else will go, to take the time needed to understand, to pay attention to the essentials, not to be distracted by the superfluous, to distinguish deceptive appearances from the truth.

Grant us the grace to recognise your dwelling places in our world and the honesty needed to tell others what we have seen.

*Pope Francis, Prayer for World Communications Day 2021*

Feast of the week  
Monday 4 April

## St Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636)

Incredibly, the patron saint of the Internet is someone who died almost 1400 years ago!

St Isidore of Seville was one of four saints in his immediate family – a tough act for the rest of us to follow! Still, however holy, Isidore's brother Leander, insistent that his younger brother would make use of his educational opportunities, bullied him so much that, unable to take any more, Isidore ran away.

Isidore eventually returned home, but Leander, not believing that he wouldn't escape again, imprisoned him in a cell to complete his studies.

Despite the ill-treatment, Isidore developed a great love for learning. He became a priest and a bishop who, remembering his own abuse, insisted on consulting people before making decisions.

Famous for his vast knowledge, Isidore was probably the first person to create an encyclopaedia. He also invented the full stop, comma and colon.

One of his last acts before his death was to give all his possessions to the poor people of Seville.

"In communications, nothing can ever completely replace seeing things in person. Some things can only be learned through first-hand experience. We do not communicate merely with words, but with our eyes, the tone of our voice and our gestures. Jesus' attractiveness to those who met him depended on the truth of his preaching; yet the effectiveness of what he said was inseparable from how he looked at others, from how he acted towards them, and even from his silence."

Pope Francis

Today:  
Isaiah 43:16-21  
Philippians 3:8-14  
John 8:1-11

Monday:  
Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62  
John 8:12-20

Tuesday:  
Numbers 21:4-9  
John 8:21-30

Wednesday:  
Daniel 3:14-20, 24-25, 28  
John 8:31-42

Thursday:  
Genesis 17:3-9  
John 8:51-59

Friday:  
Jeremiah 20:10-13  
John 10:31-42

Saturday:  
Ezekiel 37:21-28  
John 11:45-56

Next Sunday:  
Procession: Luke 19:28-40  
Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7  
Philippians 2:6-11  
Luke 22:14 – 23:56

# SUNDAY PLUS

Prepare the way



By Sr Janet Fearn  
FMDM

According to tradition, Sir Walter Raleigh saw Elizabeth I, surrounded and distracted by courtiers and admirers, about to step into a puddle. Immediately

the gallant explorer removed his cloak and laid it before the Queen. His gesture ruined his expensive garment, but kept the royal feet dry – and gained Elizabeth’s approval. For what? He brought glittering triumph and wealth, tobacco and potatoes back to England. However, Raleigh was finally arrested and executed for destroying a Spanish

outpost in South America, violating the 1604 peace treaty. His death kept Spain happy.

On Palm Sunday, crowds in Jerusalem scattered palm branches and cloaks before Jesus as he rode a donkey into the city. They greeted him as the Messiah and the Son of David – but that was on Sunday. On Friday, they would call for his

execution, not because Jesus had damaged their cloaks, but because his preaching threatened the Jewish authorities and Pontius Pilate. Jesus would die because it was politically expedient to silence him.

What good did Palm Sunday do for Jesus? Not much! Perhaps the real question is what good Palm Sunday did for us.

Raleigh’s action promoted his own cause, guaranteed royal attention and paved the way to an iconic career path, even if it ended in his execution. It was worth losing a cloak.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem was not governed by self-interest. He knew the crowds would soon change their cries and call for his death. Yet, as he would declare on Thursday, the greatest sign of love is self-sacrifice on behalf of others. Love marks the difference between Jesus and Sir Walter Raleigh.

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

## Prayer of the cross

Lord Jesus, help us to see in your cross all the crosses of the world:  
the cross of those who hunger for bread and for love;  
the cross of those who are alone and abandoned, even by their own children and relatives;  
the cross of those who thirst for justice and peace;  
the cross of the elderly who bear the weight of the years and of solitude;  
the cross of migrants who find doors closed due to fear, and hearts armoured by political calculations;  
the cross of the little ones, wounded in their innocence and their purity;  
the cross of humanity that wanders in the darkness of uncertainty and in the obscurity of the culture of the momentary;  
the cross of families broken by betrayal, by the seductions of the evil one or by murderous lightness and selfishness;  
the cross of the consecrated who seek tirelessly to bring your light in the

world and who feel rejected, mocked and humiliated;  
the cross of the consecrated who along the way have forgotten their first love;  
the cross of your children who, believing in you and seeking to live according to your word, find themselves marginalised and rejected even by their relatives and peers;  
the cross of our weaknesses, of our hypocrisies, of our betrayals, of our sins and of our many broken promises;  
the cross of your Church who, faithful to your Gospel, struggles to bring your love even among the baptized themselves;  
the cross of the Church, your bride, who feels continually assailed from within and without;  
the cross of our common home that withers gravely before our selfish eyes, blinded by greed and power.  
Lord Jesus, revive in us the hope of the resurrection and of your definitive victory against every evil and every death. Amen!

*Way of the Cross at the Colosseum 2019*

**“Let us gaze upon Jesus on the cross and say to him: ‘Lord, how much you love me! How precious I am to you!’ Let us be amazed by Jesus so that we can start living again, for the grandeur of life lies not in possessions and promotions, but in realising that we are loved. This is the grandeur of life: discovering that we are loved. And the grandeur of life lies precisely in the beauty of love. In the crucified Jesus, we see God humiliated, the Almighty dismissed and discarded. And with the grace of amazement we come to realise that in welcoming the dismissed and discarded, in drawing close to those ill-treated by life, we are loving Jesus. For that is where he is: in the least of our brothers and sisters, in the rejected and discarded, in those whom our self-righteous culture condemns.”**

Pope Francis

<b>Today:</b> Procession: Luke 19:28-40 Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7 Philippians 2:6-11 Luke 22:14 – 23:56	<b>Monday:</b> Isaiah 42:1-7 John 12:1-11	<b>Tuesday:</b> Isaiah 49:1-6 John 13:21-33, 36-38	<b>Wednesday:</b> Isaiah 50:4-9 Matthew 26:14-25	<b>Thursday:</b> Chrism Mass: Isaiah 61:1-3, 6, 8-9 Apocalypse 1:5-8 Luke 4:16-21	<b>Evening Mass:</b> Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 John 13:1-15	<b>Friday:</b> The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord: Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9 John 18:1 – 19:42	<b>Saturday:</b> The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night: Genesis 1:1 – 2:2 Genesis 22:1-18 Exodus 14:15 – 15:1	Isaiah 54:5-14 Isaiah 55:1-11 Baruch 3:9-15, 32 – 4:4 Ezekiel 36:16-28 Romans 6:3-11 Luke 24:1-12	<b>Next Sunday:</b> Acts 10:34, 37-43 Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 John 20:1-9
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# SUNDAY PLUS

See and believe



## The cosmos was shaken

By Fr Royston Price C.Ss.R.

In John's account of the resurrection of the Lord, the beloved disciple and Peter rush to the empty tomb and, going in, find the empty graveclothes. It seems that this is the key moment in their belief in the resurrection: everything now fits together, all that Jesus taught them and the witness of scripture fall into place, and they grasp that the Messiah must rise from the dead.

Jesus isn't just some political revolutionary who will chase the Romans out and restore national dignity. It seems that Judas had that idea, seeing the Kingdom of God in purely earthly terms. Even now, how often do we hear people praise Jesus for his moral teaching, but shy away from the hard, spiritual questions that his life, death

and resurrection raise? In fact, like the two racing to the tomb on that first Easter, once we grasp the reality of the resurrection, then we have the key to start to comprehend the entire life of Jesus, the entirety of scripture, and the totality of human existence. As seen vividly in the liturgy of the Easter vigil, read in the light of the risen Christ, then the human condition as well as the story of all God's actions among his chosen people become freshly illuminated. All prophecy finds its fulfilment in the glorious resurrection of Christ. That first Easter morning, amid the mist and fresh dew, the cosmos was shaken and nothing would ever again be the same.

*Fr Royston Price is the Vocations Director for the London Province of the Redemptorists.*

Risen Lord, fill me with your life and joy so that I can radiate it to everybody I meet. Fill everyone whom I know and love with new life and hope.  Amen.

## Check the evidence

By Lucy Russell

"Are statues of individuals like Rhodes and Colston of any historical value today?" This was a challenge question I set my Year 9 History class. They were uncompromising. "No," was their response. "Really? If we remove these statues and those like them, don't we risk hiding and forgetting the past? What about Antony Gormley's suggestion that Rhodes' statue is turned to face the wall?" I

thought Gormley's suggestion was worthy of discussion. They didn't. "Take them down". I was surprised, but their reaction made me think. Could we learn something from an empty plinth? What does emptiness communicate? For Mary Magdalene on Easter morning, it was an absence. For many, empty space symbolises nothingness. But physicists tell us there is a special kind of energy that fills so-called empty space. The empty tomb is the first piece of evidence in support of the resurrection. Here the emptiness communicates the truth.

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

Christ is alive, with joy we sing;  
We celebrate our risen Lord,  
Praising the glory of his name.  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

He is the sun which brings the dawn:  
He is the light of all the world,  
Setting us free from death and sin.  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.



"The Risen Shepherd goes in search of all those lost in the labyrinths of loneliness and marginalisation. He comes to meet them through our brothers and sisters who treat them with respect and kindness, and help them to hear his voice, an unforgettable voice, a voice calling them back to friendship with God."

Pope Francis

**Today:**  
Acts 10:34, 37-43  
Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6-8  
John 20:1-9

**Monday:**  
Acts 2:14, 22-33  
Matthew 28:8-15

**Tuesday:**  
Acts 2:36-41  
John 20:11-18

**Wednesday:**  
Acts 3:1-10  
Luke 24:13-35

**Thursday:**  
Acts 3:11-26  
Luke 24:35-48

**Friday:**  
Acts 4:1-12  
John 21:1-14

**Saturday:**  
Acts 4:13-21  
Mark 16:9-15

**Next Sunday:**  
Acts 5:12-16  
Apocalypse 1:9-13, 17-19  
John 20:19-31

# SUNDAY PLUS

No blame game

## After woundedness: new life

By Paul Higginson

**W**e should never beat ourselves up if we have doubts and we shouldn't think badly of those who struggle with faith or can't believe.

In today's Gospel even though the disciples had fled in fear when Jesus was arrested and taken away, there is no criticism or blame from Jesus for their lack of faith, just a gentle "Peace be with you", and a command: "As the Father

sent me, so am I sending you". When Thomas returns Jesus asks him to put his hands in his wounds. Interestingly, even after his resurrection Christ's wounds are still visible. It's almost as if he is saying to Thomas, "We are all wounded, we are all hurt, but the resurrection is here for everyone – it's here for you too!" After woundedness comes new life.

Perhaps the disciples needed to experience a period of doubt and brokenness before they could embrace their new mission to go out and spread the Gospel? The loss and sense of failure and disappointment that followed the death of Jesus leads to something deeper and better. Like the disciples, we need something to shake us out of our complacency and force us to seek out something bigger and better. For many of us, especially as we get older, certainty often gives



way to doubt. Doubt can lead us back to a calm acceptance and an appreciation of our mission and vocation. For Thomas and for us, doubt can become our teacher and the springboard to a deeper friendship with God.

*Following decades in the classroom and as a parish catechist, Paul Higginson is finding that retirement gives him even more opportunities to support his parish.*

## There was no blame game with Jesus

By Sr Mary Burke FMDM

Thomas finds love, not judgement when, having lost faith in Jesus and in the promise of the resurrection, he doubts in the depths of his being. Jesus does not dismiss Thomas' doubts or blame him for his lack of faith. In contrast, Jesus offers Thomas the gift of peace. Jesus listens, allowing Thomas to speak from the heart about his doubts. Jesus allows Thomas to touch him, even placing Thomas hand in his side. Thomas is brought to belief, not by long terse arguments or erudite theological debate, but by gentle understanding and deep love. As Jesus listened to Thomas' uncertainty and touched his fear, love was Jesus' only response.

Doubt can visit us all at times, but we can learn today that we need only to express our doubts honestly for Jesus to love us into faith as he did Thomas. And there can be no doubt about that!

*Sr Mary Burke is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.*

Loving Lord, instead of criticising the disciples for running away when you most needed them, you greeted them with peace. Teach me to follow your example. Teach me to be merciful and forgiving.  Amen.

Feast of the week  
Saturday 30 April

Bl Dr José  
Gregorio  
Hernandez  
(1864-1919)

Exactly one year ago today, this Venezuelan doctor and bacteriologist was beatified.

Known as the "doctor of the poor", Bl Gregorio treated the poor for free and frequently paid for their medicines with his own money. "Most of these people do not have resources," he told his aunt María Luisa, explaining why he kept a moneybag inside his medical bag

wherein his patients could either deposit what they could afford or help themselves to funds for their daily needs. "I am not going to deny them the consultation and I am not going to make them go through the pain of telling me that they have no money," he said. "God will help."

Bl Gregorio was accidentally hit by a car and died of head injuries as he left a pharmacy after collecting a poor woman's medicines.

The day before the beatification, Pope Francis said that he had never met a Venezuelan "who, halfway through the conversation, did not finally say to me: 'When will Gregorio be beatified?'"

"In God's mercy, all of our infirmities find healing. His mercy, in fact, does not keep a distance: it seeks to encounter all forms of poverty and to free this world of so many types of slavery. Mercy desires to reach the wounds of all, to heal them. Being apostles of mercy means touching and soothing the wounds that today afflict the bodies and souls of many of our brothers and sisters."

Pope Francis

Today:  
Acts 5:12-16  
Apocalypse 1:9-13, 17-19  
John 20:19-31

Monday:  
1 Peter 5:5-14  
Mark 16:15-20

Tuesday:  
Acts 4:32-37  
John 3:7-15

(E) St George (Solemnity):  
Apocalypse 12:10-12  
John 15:18-21 or 15:1-8

Wednesday:  
Acts 5:17-26  
John 3:16-21

Thursday:  
Acts 5:27-33  
John 3:31-36

Friday:  
Acts 5:34-42  
John 6:1-15

Saturday:  
Acts 6:1-7  
John 6:16-21

Next Sunday:  
Acts 5:27-32, 40-41  
Apocalypse 5:11-14  
John 21:1-19