

SUNDAY PLUS

Travel lightly

Step out in faith



in the “image and likeness of God”, designed for a life of love, helping those around us – we are called to mission. But often we cling to our baggage and it holds us back, our selfish ego tells us we need all our “things”, it tells us to stay home, to risk nothing, to protect “my stuff, my bread, my money”.

We are often weighed down with burdens that we have either chosen to carry, or that have been placed on us by others (which we continue to hold on to). Jesus says “Come to me... Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light”. By emptying ourselves we leave a space for God to fill. Jesus tells us today that he is all we need for the journey ahead – he asks us to leave the past behind and step out in faith, not knowing where we are going, but ready for the adventure.

After many years in the classroom, Paul Higginson's retirement offers him new possibilities for contributing to parish life.

By Paul Higginson

If you are going on a summer holiday this year it is highly likely that you will end up packing far more than you need. In today's Gospel Jesus tells the disciples to travel lightly, to carry

“no purse, no haversack”. In our journey through life Jesus wants us to lay down all the useless baggage that we carry around: the weariness, the memories and disappointments of the past that weigh us down, the guilt and frustration, the obsession with possessions, the fear of the future. We have been made for something better – made

War and Peace

By Brian Fahy

“Not everyone is as nice as you are, son,” the old man said.

The old man had been a coal miner and a soldier, had fought a war and gone back down the pit again. He was very familiar with the rough side of life. His son, a priest, had led a more sheltered existence. If Jesus sends his disciples out as lambs among wolves, the old man knew a great deal about the wolves.

Yet the old man never used bad language. He did not swear and he was the most peaceful of men. He had seen the worst that this world has to offer but came home from war knowing that life is good and that we should live it peacefully. He was never angry with his children: firm but never angry. He ranks among the seventy-two disciples and his name is written in heaven.

Brian Fahy describes himself as an “apprentice poet”. His website is to be found at www.errispoetry.com.

Feast of the week
Saturday 9 July

Our Lady of Aberdeen

During the Reformation, families willingly risked their lives, homes and everything they possessed in order to hide and protect religious items from discovery and destruction. This possibly happened with the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham, now kept in the Victoria and Albert Museum as the Langham Madonna.

It certainly happened with the 15th-century statue of Our Lady of Aberdeen, successfully hidden

for 65 years by the Gordon family of Strathbogie.

Did the death of James, the son of Mary Queen of Scots and the coronation of Charles I in 1625 have anything to do with the family smuggling the statue to the Low Countries?

A century later, having been saved from the Reformation, she was hidden and protected during the French Revolution before, in 1814, being enshrined in the church of Our Lady of Finisterre in Brussels.

Today, in St Mary's Cathedral, Aberdeen, a copy of the original statue of Our Lady of Aberdeen continues the devotion so precious to Scotland.

Lord, let me travel towards you with my hands and my heart free of clutter.  Amen.

“In his compassion, Christ drew near to the sick in body and spirit and brought them healing; he pardoned sinners and gave them new life. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for his sheep. He is the Good Samaritan who stoops to help the injured man, binds his wounds and cares for him.”

Pope Francis

Today:
Isaiah 66:10-14
Galatians 6:14-18
Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

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
(S) Our Lady of Aberdeen (Feast)

Next Sunday:
Deuteronomy 30:10-14
Colossians 1:15-20
Luke 10:25-37

SUNDAY PLUS

Safe harbour

“Protect them whereso'er they go”

By Cdr Ian Crabtree
KSG RN (rtd)

Today, Sea Sunday, we celebrate the life and work of all seafarers – those who fish; those who transport goods and passengers; those who maintain law and order on the high seas and defend the right of safe passage for all; and those

who care for seafarers' welfare. In the Royal Navy's Annual Naval Mass, celebrated at this time, naval artefacts are often used to symbolise a particular aspect of a seafarer's professional and spiritual life:

- The White Ensign, under which the men and women of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines serve, adorned with many crosses, reminds us of the cross of sacrifice and the sacrifices made by those who serve at sea, especially the cross of separation from loved ones and family.
- The ship's lantern that warns other shipping of a vessel's presence, is lit by a burning candle signifying Christ our Light, our guide and help in times of distress.
- The ship's bell, registers the passage of time,

encouraging us to appreciate each day in its fullness.

- The compass and sextant, which enable safe navigation, are reminiscent of the Word and sacraments that guide us in our daily lives. These, together with the Naval Hymn "Eternal Father strong to save", which invokes the help of the Holy Trinity, remind us of our vulnerability and need for God. Today, let us be especially mindful of all seafarers and their families and pray that the Lord will "Protect them whereso'er they go". May Mary, Star of the Sea, intercede for them.

Cdr Ian Crabtree, a retired Royal Navy Warfare Officer, is currently employed as the Pastoral Assistant to the Royal Navy Roman Catholic Chaplaincy.

Sea Sunday supports the work of the Apostleship of the Sea, the Catholic Church's maritime agency that provides spiritual and welfare support to seafarers arriving in Great Britain and ports around the world. Its extensive network of port chaplains and ship visitors offer pastoral and practical assistance to seafarers who work far from home, separated from their families, and in sometimes harsh working conditions.



Our Lady of the Boat

Nuestra Señora de la Barca: Our Lady of the Boat. The small church overlooks the Atlantic Ocean on the Galician coast in north-western Spain. Unprotected from the weather and surrounded by bare rocks, it is where, according to legend, a frustrated St James wanted to abandon his efforts to preach the Gospel to people who refused to listen. Suddenly, he saw Our Lady, crossing the sea towards him in a stone boat. Mary consoled the unhappy apostle and told him to keep

working for her Son. James obeyed – and stayed for 40 years.

The extremely hazardous shore surrounding the church is strewn with massive rocks, many of them hidden by the sea, even at low tide. Countless wrecks over the centuries led to the construction of a string of lighthouses to warn anybody travelling by boat.

Because Mary had herself travelled by boat, she became the patroness of the local fishermen and then, of seafarers.

Foghorns across the Mersey

By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

Fog and foghorns automatically accompanied each other in a "pea souper". Ferries crossed the Mersey whilst liners, cargo ships, pilot boats and other vessels headed out to, or returned from, sea at right angles to the ferries. The foghorns' repetitive sound safeguarded Liverpool's ships and all those who sailed in them. They also embraced the city, highlighting the everyday hazards of seafaring before the Internet, GPS and other modern navigational aids. Most Liverpool families had links with the sea – and we prayed for seafarers, especially

when we heard foghorns. "The day I went to sea for the first time", an elderly retired sailor declared, "my mother gave me a rosary. That was over seventy years ago and I'm still using them. The beads have almost worn away but that doesn't matter. Our Lady accompanied me through many a storm at sea, throughout the war and on more long voyages than I can remember. When you're at sea, that's when you learn to pray!"

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

"The life of a sailor or fisherman is not only marked by isolation and distance. At times, it is also painfully affected by shameful experiences of abuse and injustice, by the snares of those engaged in human trafficking, and by the extortion of forced labour. At other times, they are not paid their rightful salary or are left behind in distant ports. In addition to threats from nature – storms and hurricanes – they must face human threats, such as piracy or terrorist attacks. They cross the world's oceans and seas, landing in ports where they are not always welcome."

Pope Francis

Today: Deuteronomy 30:10-14
Colossians 1:15-20
Luke 10:25-37

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: Genesis 18:1-10
Colossians 1:24-28
Luke 10:38-42

SUNDAY PLUS

The one thing necessary

Only one thing is needed

By Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.



Jesus with Mary and Martha. KUCO / Shutterstock.com

In telling the story of Jesus' visit to his women friends in today's Gospel, Luke underlines the importance of the guest: Martha addresses Jesus as Lord, while Mary sits at the Lord's feet. This is not a casual visit. In response to Jesus' presence, Martha becomes fully engaged in preparing a meal while Mary becomes fully engaged in listening to the Lord. The scene of Mary sitting with her guest is a world away from the religious practice of the day: women were not instructed in the Law by the rabbis because they could be neither a teacher

nor a disciple. But the word of Jesus is for men and women: so Mary adopts the disciple's posture.

Martha, however, thinks that her sister should be doing something more important than listening to Jesus and she asks him to tell Mary to help with all the serving – in which case Jesus can sit alone and talk to himself! But Jesus is not allowing Martha to write his script, for he regards Martha as a woman who bustles her way into distraction. She is anxious about so many things that she cannot focus on the real priority of the moment. In all her fret and fuss Martha is missing the one thing that is needed now: to welcome the Lord by listening to the word that he speaks.

Jesus is not diminishing the importance of Martha's kindness in preparing a meal. Rather, he is supporting Mary's kindness in listening to him. Sometimes people need a receptive ear more than a tasty bite.

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

Martha and Mary

"Martha and Mary are two sisters; they also have a brother, Lazarus, but he does not appear on this occasion. Jesus is passing through their village and, the text says, Martha received him at her home (cf. 10: 38). This detail enables us to understand that Martha is the elder of the two, the one in charge of the house. Indeed, when Jesus has been made comfortable, Mary sits at his feet and listens to him while Martha is totally absorbed by her many tasks, certainly due to the special guest.

We seem to see the scene: one sister bustling about busily and the other, as it were, enraptured by the presence of the Teacher and by his words. A little later Martha, who is evidently resentful, can no longer resist and complains, even feeling that she has a right to criticise Jesus: 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me!' Martha would even like to teach the Teacher! Jesus on the other hand answers her very calmly: 'Martha, Martha', and the repetition

of her name expresses his affection, 'you are anxious and troubled about many things; only one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her'. Christ's words are quite clear: there is no contempt for active life, nor even less for generous hospitality; rather, a distinct reminder of the fact that the only really necessary thing is something else: listening to the word of the Lord; and the Lord is there at that moment, present in the Person of Jesus! All the rest will pass away and will be taken from us, but the word of God is eternal and gives meaning to our daily actions."

Pope Francis

Loving Lord, please let me never be too busy to hear the unspoken cries for love and attention in the hearts of the people who are part of my everyday life. Let me share with them my time and your compassion.  Amen.

Feast of the week
Friday 22 April



St Mary Magdalene

This Sunday's Gospel refers to Mary of Bethany and, a few days later, we celebrate the feast of St Mary Magdalene, the "apostle to the apostles" and the first witness to the resurrection of Jesus.

As friends of Jesus, the two women who shared the same name possibly both saw Jesus call Mary of Bethany's brother Lazarus from the tomb. A short time afterwards, Mary Magdalene stood at the foot of the cross with Mary, the mother of Jesus, John and a small group of women. She helped to prepare his body for burial and then, on Easter Sunday morning, met her risen Lord as she sat before the empty tomb, weeping in despair, convinced that thieves had stolen his body.

Tradition suggests that, after the ascension, when John set up house in Ephesus, Mary Magdalene also travelled there, as a companion to Our Lady, for whom she would care for the rest of her life.

Today:
Genesis 18:1-10
Colossians 1:24-28
Luke 10:38-42

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

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

Wednesday:
Jeremiah 1:1, 4-10
Matthew 13:1-9

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

Friday:
Song of Songs 3:1-4
John 20:1-2, 11-18

Saturday:
Jeremiah 7:1-11
Matthew 13:24-30

Next Sunday:
Genesis 18:20-32
Colossians 2:12-14
Luke 11:1-13

SUNDAY PLUS

Our Father

The Gospel in a few lines



By Paul Higginson

The “Our Father” encapsulates the entire Gospel in just a few simple lines. As a wise teacher once advised when asked how to pray – “Say the Our Father and take an hour to say it”. The focus of our prayer often begins with me: “what do I want?”, “what do I need?” – but here we pray *Our*

Father (not *My* Father). Because Jesus sees us as his brothers and sisters, then we too can join him in calling God our heavenly Father – we are his children. The word Jesus uses is “Abba” – best translated as “Dad” in modern English.

We then pray for the coming of God’s kingdom – a kingdom not of armies, thrones and worldly power but one of justice, peace and truth. We

are co-creators of this kingdom and this is to be our principal task in life. Earth is not a preparation for a heaven that is to come, it is the place where heaven is brought into being by our actions and our life with Christ. We ask for “daily bread”, the practical and spiritual nourishment to sustain us, not just for ourselves, but for all those in need. We then pray for forgiveness from God in the

same way that we forgive those who hurt us. You cannot live an authentic life unless you are prepared to forgive. Finally, we ask God not to give us our “test” or “cross” until he has given us all we need to be able to get through it.

After many years in the classroom, Paul Higginson's retirement offers him new possibilities for contributing to parish life.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. 
Amen.

Feast of the week Saturday 25 July

St James

Visit the Cast Courts of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London for an apostolic surprise! A vast, life-size, nineteenth-century plaster cast of the twelfth-century Portico de la Gloria at the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain brings many an amazed museum visitor to a standstill.

Tradition holds that the remains of St James are interred within the cathedral. Since the ninth century, countless pilgrims have headed to the Spanish city identified with the apostle.

Today, approximately 200,000 pilgrims per year follow the Camino de Santiago (the Way of St James). Each has their reasons for undertaking a pilgrimage which spans Europe and ends in the cathedral at Compostela. Since its creation, how many people have seen the V&A copy of the original cathedral entrance, remembering their journey’s end and their pilgrimage-inspired life changes? How many walked before them in previous centuries? Only God knows. Similarly, only God knows who would have walked had they been able. Might the V&A offer a mini-pilgrimage destination?



Prayer works

By Fr Royston Price C.Ss.R.

“I thank you Lord, with all my heart: you have heard the words of my mouth”. The Lord always hears our prayer, those words we speak out loud, those made in the silence of our heart, and even those that we can’t put into words, that bubble up from the depths of our inner life. We don’t have to be notably articulate to pray, but just speak

to God with confidence, talking to the Lord as we would to our best friend. Indeed, Christ gives us the definitive Christian prayer in the Our Father: so simple that children can learn it at their parent’s knee, and so deep that entire lifetimes can be spent contemplating and inhabiting it. We need to ask the Lord for everything, from our daily bread to help in our daily struggles, and also to place ourselves in the divine presence, raising our hearts and our minds to the God who has loved us from eternity.

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

“We must pray to the Father, who begot us. But this is not all: we must pray “our” Father, that is, not the Father of a generic and too anonymous “all”, but the One who begot you, who gave you life, who gave life to you and me.”

Pope Francis

Today:
Genesis 18:20-32
Colossians 2:12-14
Luke 11:1-13

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

Tuesday:
Jeremiah 15:10. 16-21
Matthew 13:44-46

Wednesday:
Jeremiah 15:10. 16-21
Matthew 13:44-46

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

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

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

Next Sunday:
Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23
Colossians 3:1-5. 9-11
Luke 12:13-21

SUNDAY PLUS

Life's meaning

By Lucy Russell

Today's Gospel message is straightforward for those who have more than they need: there is no advantage to storing up your wealth for yourself, share what you can't use. But what about those who aren't sitting on savings and possessions? What are you rich in? Time? Creativity? Energy? Sensitivity? How can you use what you have in abundance to be rich towards God?

Each of us has something we can afford to give away. Aristotle said: "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." You could swap the word "excellence" for "kindness". Kindness is like a muscle, and when we use it repeatedly, it gets stronger. More than that, it sets off a chain reaction.

When someone is kind to you, you are likely to pass that on and be kind to someone else. It is a biological response. It's not possible to be too kind, and it doesn't matter what is the motivation for your kindness.

We all have holes within ourselves that we want to fill. I think of those holes as space for God and sometimes I invite God to fill that space with the success and good things that happen to other people. We can take joy and satisfaction from noticing or helping someone else and putting a smile on their face. How we live our lives as individuals and in relationship to others matters to God. Life is about relationships and sharing what we have been given.

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

Life is about relationships



Loving Lord, transform my life. May I reflect you and your love in everything that I say, think and do.  Amen.

Life's true riches

By Brian Fahy

The tragic story of Lord Lucan is the tale of a titled man who thought himself entitled to anything and everything. Born into a wealthy family, he grew up wanting for nothing. Grown up and inheriting the title from his father, he was at first a banker, but gave that up to become – wait for it – a professional gambler. He won a lot and lost much more.

When his marriage broke down, he felt entitled, as an earl and as a male, to have the major "right" to his children. It came as a shock to him that the law took a different view. In his own narrow and entitled world he could persuade himself that his way of seeing things was the right way. "Building bigger barns" for himself was his only occupation.

We can all play Lord Lucan's game. Lord, keep us from self-delusion.

Brian Fahy describes himself as an "apprentice poet". His website is to be found at www.errispoetry.com.

Feast of the week
Saturday 6 July

The Transfiguration of the Lord

Peter, James and John accompanied Jesus up the mountainside and then saw him as they had never imagined possible. They knew that their friend could say and do some extraordinary things but had never expected to see him chat to two hugely important – and long dead – historical figures. Moreover, Moses and Elijah treated Jesus with deference, as someone greater than themselves. The apostles suddenly saw

Jesus in a completely new light and understood him differently.

Transfiguration is also an everyday experience! How often has something happened which has completely changed our knowledge and understanding of someone we had previously thought we knew well? It might only be a momentary glimpse before everything returns to "normal" but occasionally we witness a bigger, deeper loveliness than we had ever previously encountered. Our understanding has changed – and forever – because we've touched utter goodness, utter greatness. We've seen God in someone else.

"Today it will do us good to think about how my faith is, how my Christian life is: is it a Christian life of cosmetics, of appearance, or is it a Christian life with a faith which is active in charity?"

Pope Francis

Today:
Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23
Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11
Luke 12:13-21

Monday:
Jeremiah 28:1-17
Matthew 14:13-21

Tuesday:
Jeremiah 30:1-2, 12-15, 18-22
Matthew 14:22-36

Wednesday:
Jeremiah 31:1-7
Matthew 15:21-28

Thursday:
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Matthew 16:13-23

Friday:
Nahum 2:1, 3; 3:1-3, 6-7
Matthew 16:24-28

Saturday:
Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14
2 Peter 1:16-19
Luke 9:28-36

Next Sunday:
Wisdom 18:6-9
Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19
Luke 12:32-48