

SUNDAY PLUS

Calm down!

“Do you love me?”



By Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

In polite society you are not supposed to go around asking people questions like “Who do you say I am?” or “Do you love me?” perhaps because the answers might be deadening. Questions that go to the heart of the matter, particularly when the matter concerns what you really think of another person, are usually eased out of the conversation like slightly potty relatives are eased out of the room after they have misbehaved. In today’s Gospel, however, Jesus is in good voice when he asks Peter three times if he really loves him.


After a long night’s fishing the disciples come up with zero, and a distant figure on the shore tells them to try again. They pull in a marvellous haul. The beloved disciple identifies the figure as Jesus and Peter in his excitement tries treading water to be with him. Peter has a wet breakfast with the Lord.

After the meal Jesus asks Peter three times about the reality of his love. Insisting on love is something of a mark with Jesus. Three times Peter affirms his love, as three times Jesus insists on it. And when Peter professes his love, Jesus commissions him to

care for his flock. Seeing the Lord is always a dismissal for ministry; loving the Lord is always a charge to care for others.

And that is what Peter does. In spite of the opposition, Peter will continue insisting on his love for Jesus and this insistence will take him to martyrdom in Rome. In the end Jesus’ question “Simon, do you love me?” becomes profoundly unnecessary. There is nothing circumstantial about Peter’s love.

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

Loving Jesus, you calmed the anxiety of your disciples by the simple act of cooking breakfast for them. Help me to see that sometimes it’s the most mundane, ordinary things which can make all the difference to others.  Amen.

Jesus in the ordinary

By Sr Mary Burke FMDM

How wonderful it can be to return from a hard day’s work to find a meal cooked and ready! In today’s Gospel, Jesus provides for the physical needs as well as the spiritual needs of his disciples. They have been unsuccessful in their fishing attempts and by offering them a little advice, Jesus enables them to find an abundance of fish. Jesus’ invitation to do something practical and familiar eases their sense of loss and bewilderment, offers them security and calms their fears.

Bread and fish become the means by which Jesus makes himself known. Very ordinary and familiar food become symbols of the Lord’s resurrection and of Christ’s living presence with the disciples. Jesus sanctifies the ordinary and makes it holy. Perhaps, we too, in this coming week, might find Jesus’ present in the ordinary - calming us in the familiar and offering us food for our journey.

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

Feast of the week
Tuesday 3 May

Ss Philip and James

When in Rome...

Everyone who visits Rome sees the Piazza Venezia, Forum and Colosseum. Try walking a couple of hundred yards from the Piazza Venezia to the church of the Holy Apostles. Instead of focusing on the upper basilica, where Bonnie Prince Charlie and his brother Cardinal Henry Stuart were baptised, their parents married and their mother’s heart preserved in a stone casket, go downstairs to the confessio underneath the high altar.

There, you will find the tomb of the apostles Philip and James. They are surrounded by glorious early Christian frescoes of the vine and branches, fish, loaves of bread, pelicans and a beautiful picture of Mary with Jesus on her knee – both dressed as Romans, in white gowns decorated by two dark stripes of imperial purple.

A closed-off staircase, 1400 years ago, led to the street, enabling people to pop in for a visit and pay their respects to Philip, James and other early martyrs. Nothing really changes, does it? We still make our personal mini-pilgrimages.

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

Monday:
Acts 6:8-15
John 6:22-29

Tuesday:
1 Corinthians 15:1-8
John 14:6-14

Wednesday:
Acts 8:1-8
John 6:35-40

(E) The English Martyrs
(Feast): Acts 7:55-60;
Matthew 10:17-20

Thursday:
Acts 8:26-40
John 6:44-51

Friday:
Acts 9:1-20
John 6:52-59

Saturday:
Acts 9:31-42
John 6:60-69

Next Sunday:
Acts 13:14, 43-52
Apocalypse 7:9, 14-17
John 10:27-30

SUNDAY PLUS

The voice of encouragement

Destined for eternal life

By Paul Higginson

I remember my parents telling me about a hell fire and brimstone homily they had heard before I was born. The priest had half-scared them to death by depicting a vivid picture of eternal pain and suffering that might one day lie in wait for them. I'm not sure what text he was preaching from, but it certainly wasn't today's Gospel! Here Jesus tells us that we are his sheep and "I give them eternal life; they will

never be lost, and no one will ever steal them from me". What wonderful words of encouragement! Our faith is not based on fear of a vengeful, unforgiving God. This is just not who God is. Why do we find it so difficult to understand and accept that God is all-embracing, unconditional love and forgiveness? We are his sheep and he is our Good Shepherd; he is always keeping watch over us and we will never be stolen from him.

Of course, sometimes people create hell for themselves here and now by their actions. If we choose to



do wrong then the consequences for us are invariably pain, discomfort and suffering in this life. But as for the next life, remember that Jesus goes back and finds the lost sheep and brings them home. We are destined for eternal life with Christ: that is the extraordinary promise of today's Gospel – our

vocation is to help create the Kingdom of Heaven on earth now and to experience it fully in the life that is to come.

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.

Prayer to discover your vocation

Almighty God,
You have made me to know you,
To love you, and to serve you,
And thereby to find and fulfil myself.

I know that you are in all things
And that every path can lead me to you,
But, of them all, there is one path especially
By which you want me to come to you.

Since I will do what you want of me,
I pray you; send your Holy Spirit to me;
Into my mind to show me what you want of me;
Into my heart to give me the determination to do it,
And to do it with all my love, with all my mind,
And with all my strength, right to the end.
Amen.

Diocese of Elphin, Ireland

"Wherever the Spirit sends you, I encourage you to enable the men and women of our time to discover the mercy of God who loved us to the point of dwelling among us."

Pope Francis

Lord, as you called
your disciples,
call us now.
Open our ears to
listen to you calling;
Open our eyes to
see you;
Open our hearts
to your love.
Help us to hear you,
to experience your
presence with us
and to love you.
And loving you,
let us serve you,
our servant King.
✚ Amen.

Feast of the week
Tuesday 10 May

St Joseph
de Veuster

(1840-1889)
(Damian of Molokai)

Leprosy used to be a death sentence. When diagnosed with this infectious disease that had no known treatment or cure, people were banished from their families, homes and society to live in isolation or in leper colonies and settlements. It was a life of total ostracism, loneliness, disfigurement, pain and suffering.

Some brave souls ignored the objections of wider society and cared for people suffering from what is today known as Hansen's disease and can be treated.

When, in 1873, Fr Damian agreed to travel to the colony of Molokai, he knew that he was signing his own death certificate. Undeterred, he spent the last eleven years of his life caring for the people of Molokai. He built houses, schools, roads, hospitals, and churches. He dressed residents' ulcers, dug a reservoir, made coffins, dug graves, shared pipes, and dipped his hand into their dishes of food to eat with them. He gave medical and emotional support that others refused to offer, scared for their own well-being. He eventually died of Hansen's disease on 15 April 1889, aged 49.



Today:
Acts 13:14, 43-52
Apocalypse 7:9, 14-17
John 10:27-30

Monday:
Acts 11:1-18
John 10:1-10

Tuesday:
Acts 11:19-26
John 10:22-30

Wednesday:
Acts 12:24-13:5
John 12:44-50

Thursday:
Acts 13:13-25
John 13:16-20

Friday:
Acts 13:26-33
John 14:1-6

Saturday:
Acts 1:15-17, 20-26
John 15:9-17

Next Sunday:
Acts 14:21-27
Apocalypse 21:1-5
John 13:31-35

SUNDAY PLUS

Love one another



Loving our future neighbours

Recently I laughed raucously at a meme. It depicted a few sports commentators reeling in their seats with looks of shock and amazement at whatever they had just witnessed. The caption was: “People over 50 watching the birdfeeder in their garden!” It tickled me so much because I had previously seen some photos from my parents on our family chat – photos of winged visitors to their back garden. I hope anyone reading this knows that I am only playfully teasing you. My parents are on to something. They have a deeply Christian instinct here.

In the second reading today from the Book of Revelation, in this

glorious vision of the beyond, the one from the throne pronounces that he is “making the whole of creation new.” Heaven will not just be peopled, but will be a glorious remaking of all that is and has been. We believe that from the beginning, God created all that is and marvelling at his handiwork is an act of worship. Ralph Waldo Emerson’s encouragement comes to mind: “Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything that is beautiful. For beauty is God’s handwriting.”

Nature is God’s love letter to us.

Creation is God’s gift to us, and we would do well to look after it so that future generations may in their turn learn to read God’s love letter. Caring for our environment shows love for our neighbours in the future. Concern for ecology is not just for hippies or Franciscans. It is a fundamentally Christian virtue.

Fr Peter Morris’ book, Christian Playfulness, is available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk.

By Fr Peter Morris
C.Ss.R.

With an open heart

By Brian Fahy

Michael Ball, the singer, is forever associated with the song, “Love Changes Everything”. The song celebrates how being in love changes everything about yourself, how you feel and how you view the world. It changes “earth and sky”. It changes “how you live and how you die.” It “brings you glory, bring you pain. Nothing in the world will ever be the same”.

This love, when it flowers, leads to parenthood, and certainly then you can sing that nothing will ever be the same! Now love brings you “sleepless nights, change a nappy, walk the floor. Warm a bottle, feed the baby, walk some more.” Love will never, never let you be the same.

The love of Jesus for us has the same effect. “Love one another as I have loved you” is a love like no other. It always perseveres in doing good to everyone. Love like that changes everything.

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

“Growth in holiness is a journey in community, side by side with others. We see this in some holy communities. From time to time, the Church has canonised entire communities that lived the Gospel heroically or offered to God the lives of all their members... We should also remember the more recent witness borne by the Trappists of Tibhirine, Algeria, who prepared as a community for martyrdom.”

Pope Francis

Feast of the week
Saturday 17 May

Monks of Tibhirine

“I should like, when the time comes, to have a clear space which would allow me to beg forgiveness of God and of all my fellow human beings, and at the same time to forgive with all my heart the one who would strike me down...”


For this life given up, totally mine and totally theirs, I thank God who seems to have wished it entirely for the sake of that joy in everything and in spite of everything. In this “thank you,” which is said for everything in my life from now on, I

certainly include you, friends of yesterday and today, and you my friends of this place, along with my mother and father, my brothers and sisters and their families — the hundredfold granted as was promised!

And you also, the friend of my final moment, who would not be aware of what you were doing. Yes, for you also I wish this ‘thank you’ – and this adieu – to commend you to the God whose face I see in yours.

And may we find each other, happy ‘good thieves’, in Paradise, if it pleases God, the Father of us both. Amen.”

From the Last Testament of Fr Christian de Chergé, one of the monks

Loving Lord, let me discover the goodness of the people around me before it is too late for me to show how much I love and treasure them.  Amen.

Today:
Acts 14:21-27
Apocalypse 21:1-5
John 13:31-35

Monday:
Acts 14:5-18
John 14:21-26

Tuesday:
Acts 14:19-28
John 14:27-31

Wednesday:
Acts 15:1-6
John 15:1-8

Thursday:
Acts 15:7-21
John 15:9-11

Friday:
Acts 15:22-31
John 15:12-17

Saturday:
Acts 16:1-10
John 15:18-21

Next Sunday:
Acts 15:1-2, 22-29
Apocalypse 21:10-14, 22-29
John 14:23-29

SUNDAY PLUS

The gift of peace

Willing to learn?

By Fr Peter Morris C.Ss.R.

Difficulties in domestic and community life often arise because we have stopped listening to each other. I have decided that I am right, they are wrong and that the only way forward is for others to get on board with me. If I am honest enough with myself and with those involved, underneath this unwillingness to budge is tremendous fear. Learning involves embracing something new and willingness to tread an unknown path.

I have recently discovered the thought of the Canadian clinical psychologist, Jordan Peterson. I understand that he is not perceived well in some circles; however, I think some of his thought is quite useful. Rule number nine in his

book, *Twelve Rules for Life*, is "Assume that the person you are listening to knows something you don't." This sounds to me like something you may find in the Book of Wisdom. Underneath this notion is the belief that learning is important to me and that other people can help me to grow in wisdom – even those I perceive as enemies.

In today's Gospel, Jesus promises his disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will teach them everything they will need. The Holy Spirit can help us in this essential task of discipleship and can inspire in us this growth that is sore needed on our journey.

Am I truly open to learning from the people around me? Am I willing to listen intently? Am I resolved to continue to be a disciple, which literally means a perpetual learner?



Fr Peter Morris' book, *Christian Playfulness*, is available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk.

The gift of gentleness

No: it is not yours to open buds into blossoms.
Shake the bud, strike it; it is beyond your power to make it blossom.
Your touch soils it, you tear its petals to pieces and
strew them in the dust.

But no colours appear, and no perfume.

Ah! it is not for you to open the bud into a blossom.

He who can open the bud does it so simply.

He gives it a glance, and the life-sap stirs through its veins.

At his breath the flower spreads its wings and flutters in the wind.

Colours flush out like heart-longings,

the perfume betrays a sweet secret.

He who can open the bud does it so simply.

Fruit Gathering, XVIII, Rabindranath Tagore

"We look to the Lord, who suffered so upon the cross, but he never lost his peace. Peace, this peace, is not our own: it is not sold, and we do not buy it. It is a gift of God for which we must beg.

Pope Francis

Feast of the week
Friday 27 May

St Augustine of Canterbury (d. 604)

St Augustine landed in Anglo-Saxon Britain after Pope Gregory the Great met some slaves on sale in the market in Rome. The experience catalysed his sending of Augustine to people who were "not Angles but angels!"


The Romans brought Christianity to Britain. Saint Alban, the first-recorded British Christian martyr, died in 305, 590 years before Augustine landed on Kentish shores. The Glastonbury legend says that Joseph of Arimathea set up the first British Christian

community at Glastonbury. After the departure of the Romans, small pockets of Christianity survived until Augustine's arrival, although there is little evidence that Romano-British Christians tried to bring the Anglo-Saxons into the fold.

After Kent's King Ethelbert became a Christian, Augustine reported that 10,000 of his subjects followed the king.

During his eight years as the first Archbishop of Canterbury, Augustine's limited understanding of the culture, traditions and thinking of the people he had come to evangelise possibly explains his limited effectiveness in Wales and other parts of England.



God of peace, teach me to be a peacemaker. Help me to bring your gift of healing to the people around me. May I act with tenderness and compassion towards others and may I be gentle with myself.  Amen.

Today:
Acts 15:1-2, 22-29
Apocalypse
21:10-14, 22-23
John 14:23-29

Monday:
Acts 16:11-15
John 15:26-16:4

Tuesday:
Acts 16:22-34
John 16:5-11

Wednesday:
Acts 17:15, 22-18:1
John 16:12-15

Thursday:
Acts 1:1-11
Ephesians 1:17-23
or Hebrews
9:24-28; 10:19-23
Luke 24:46-53

(I) Acts 18:1-8
John 16:16-20

Friday:
Acts 18:9-18
John 16:20-23

(E) St Augustine of
Canterbury (Feast):
1 Thessalonians 2:2-8
Luke 10:1-9

Saturday:
Acts 18:23-28
John 16:23-28

Next Sunday:
Acts 7:55-60
Apocalypse
22:12-14, 16-17, 20
John 17:20-26

SUNDAY PLUS

Proclaim the message!

Death and new birth



By Fr Denis McBride
C.Ss.R.

Stephen, the first martyr, is described as a man full of faith who preaches in the name of Jesus and works wonders among the people. Stephen is brought before the Council where he is charged with claiming that Jesus will destroy the Temple and change the Law. In his own defence he makes a long speech accusing his accusers of resisting the Holy Spirit. When they hear this the Council go into uproar, rush Stephen out of the city and stone him. The final scene is witnessed by Saul: Stephen forgives his executioners before he is killed.

Like Jesus his master, Stephen's final act is not a scream of hate but a word of forgiveness. His last act is a refusal to mirror the hatred he sees in

his executioners. His martyrdom is an appointment not with hate but with forgiveness. And forgiveness turns up to keep the appointment – dead on time.

There is no doubt that the way of Stephen's dying prepared for the conversion of Saul, because the voice of the forgiving Christ echoes in the voice of the dying disciple. But perhaps there is more. We do not know if a shadow came over Saul when he witnessed the killing of Stephen. We do know that he could not deny being closely linked to this anguish. Did Stephen's violent death say anything to the silent watcher? Every killing of another human being is an accusation: in the death of Stephen, was Saul accused of persecuting Christ? In the death of the first martyr, was there the birth of the last apostle?

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True freedom of expression

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action –
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Gitanjali, Rabindranath Tagore

“We will never discover the special, personal calling that God has in mind for us if we remain enclosed in ourselves, in our usual way of doing things, in the apathy of those who fritter away their lives in their own little world. We would lose the chance to dream big and to play our part in the unique and original story that God wants to write with us.”

Pope Francis

Feast of the week
Tuesday 31 May


The Visitation

Fresh as a flower at the first ray of dawn,
She came to her cousin whose morning was gone.
But there leaped a little child in the ancient womb
And there leaped a little hope in every ancient tomb.

Hail, little sister, who heralds the spring.
Hail, brave Mother, who carries the King.
Hail to the moment beneath your breast.
May all generations call you blessed.

When you walk in the summer through the heat on the hill,
When your one with the wind and one with his will – be brave
With the burdens you are blessed to bear,
For it's Christ that you carry everywhere, everywhere, everywhere.

Sr Miriam Therese Winter MMM

Lord, may the seed of love which you planted within me, produce a beautiful flower which will touch many hearts.  Amen.

Today:
Acts 7:55-60
Apocalypse 22:12-14, 16-17, 20
John 17:20-26

(I) Acts 1:1-11
Ephesians 1:17-23
or Hebrews 9:24-28;
10:19-23
Luke 24:46-53

Monday:
Acts 19:1-8
John 16:29-33

Tuesday:
Zephaniah 3:14-18
or Romans 12:9-16
Luke 1:39-56

Wednesday:
Acts 20:28-38
John 17:11-19

Thursday:
Acts 22:30; 23:6-11
John 17:20-26

Friday:
Acts 25:13-21
John 21:15-19

Saturday:
Mass in the Morning
Acts 28:16-20, 30-31
John 21:20-25

Next Sunday:
Mass During the Day:
Acts 2:1-11
Romans 8:8-17
John 14:15-16, 23-26