

SUNDAY PLUS



Seeing can lead to believing

A Year of the Word



Look deeper and see God

by Fr Paul Douthwaite

The parable of the two sons is found only in the Gospel of Matthew, which endeavours to establish Jesus as the awaited Messiah. In the context of several encounters between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, the evangelist

exposes the religion of the time as consisting purely of show and lacking depth. Jesus' parable points to those on the fringes of society as the ones who, having witnessed the guidance of John, came to believe in Jesus.

Prior to his crucifixion and death, Jesus embarks upon the final stages of his ministry in Jerusalem. It is in this setting that he presents the Jewish

religious leaders with this parable. The first son, who refused to do the father's will but then went on to do it, represents those who were viewed by onlookers as not being in a good relationship with God. However, having witnessed the guidance of John, they recognised Jesus as the Messiah and in so doing renewed their relationship with God. The second son, who promised to do the father's will but then did not live out the promise, represents the religious

leaders who on the surface look to be in perfect relationship with God. However, there is no depth to their relationship, and they do not themselves achieve the high standards that they demand.

A relationship with God that goes beyond the surface, has depth and is holistic – as was that of John the Baptist – is a witness and has the potential to lead others into believing.

Fr Paul Douthwaite is the National Catholic Chaplain for Prisons.

Just set sail

by Malcolm Mann

In today's first reading, God corrects the Israelites' mistaken view of divine injustice towards them. Their vision has become blurred: God's unfairness is actually their sinfulness.

In the second reading, St Paul provides the medicine that the Philippians need to stay spiritually healthy. He tells them to have the same mind as Christ Jesus who was humble and obedient "even to accepting death – death on a cross".

Finally, in the Gospel, Jesus reveals the depths of the Father's mercy: it is available even to those who are regarded as the worst in society. And, unlike the societal

elite, those who are marginalised and disregarded are accepting that same mercy.

The prostitutes and tax collectors are pioneers of God's love. In the barque of St Peter, let us set sail with them and let their wonderful example challenge and guide us on the way.

Malcolm Mann is Secretary of The Keys, the Catholic Writers Guild of England and Wales.

"The best response to offer to our society which, at times, tends to marginalise people with disabilities is the 'weapon' of love, not the false, sugary and affected one, but the real, concrete and respectful one."

Pope Francis

Unexpected icons

by Paul Higginson

Sometimes we know what we have to do, but for some reason we don't do it. Jesus often points out that actions speak louder than words. It is what we do in our daily lives that makes us holy rather than our position in society, our fine words or our hard-won reputation. He praises the tax collectors and prostitutes who believed the message of

the Gospel and acted on it. Jesus was saying that many of those who hear the Good News do not repent and do not act in a loving way to those around them. Once again, Jesus turns on its head all of the accepted wisdom, judgements and prejudices of society and asks us to learn from the example of the tax collectors and prostitutes, who gladly accepted and humbly put into practice the Gospel he was preaching.

Paul Higginson is the Assistant Principal at the Catholic Sixth Form College in Harrow and has been a parish catechist for thirty years.

Dearest Lord, insight is often more valuable than physical sight. Open the eyes of my heart to see you in everyone whom I will meet today. Let me recognise you in them. 🕊 Amen.

Dear Parishioner,

It is with much delight that we can return to the public celebration of Holy Mass. A warm welcome back! We have all lived in the wilderness for too long, some of us ending up feeling lonely and afraid.

We can now enjoy a long-awaited return to the community celebration of our faith, to togetherness, to being nourished and fed by the Bread of Life.

Let us give thanks for all that we have received, all that has been taken away, and all that has been left behind. It is our intention to repeat this message in our Newsletters to remind us to reflect on the past and rejoice in the present as we reunite around the altar to receive, once more, the Eucharist.

Today:
Ezekiel 18:25-28
Philippians 2:1-11
Matthew 21:28-32

Monday:
Job 1:6-22
Luke 9:46-50

Tuesday:
Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14
or Apocalypse 12:7-12
John 1:47-51

Wednesday:
Job 9:1-12, 14-16
Luke 9:57-62

Thursday:
Job 19:21-27
Luke 10:1-12

Friday:
Exodus 23:20-23
Matthew 18:1-5, 10

Saturday:
Job 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17
Luke 10:17-24

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 5:1-7
Philippians 4:6-9
Matthew 21:33-43