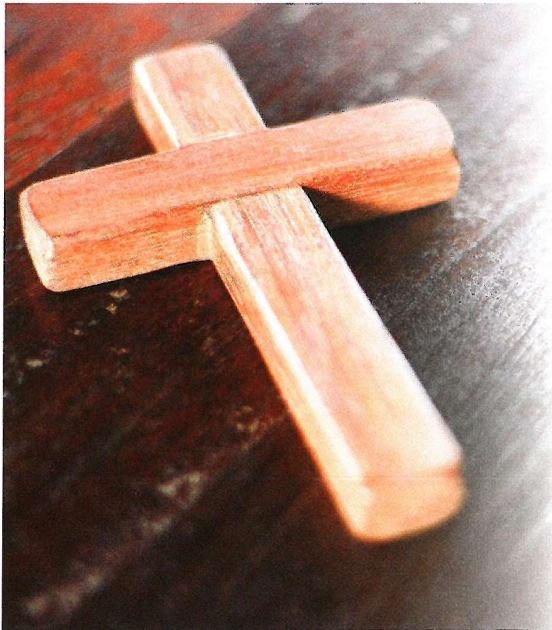


SUNDAY PLUS

Be blessed

A Year of the Word

Sanctified brethren



by Fr Denis
McBride C.Ss.R.

Lake Wobegon is a quiet town, the seat of Mist County in Minnesota, USA. It doesn't actually appear on any map because it's an imaginary place, the centre of a marvellous portrait of small-town American life in *Lake Wobegon Days* by Garrison Keillor. We follow the fortunes of a skinny kid who is raised in this strait-laced town where the first car and the first radio were greeted with stubborn scepticism by the townsfolk. Our hero is fascinated by the Catholic Church with all its saints and processions and colour; he belongs to a small sect that meets in his Uncle Al's bare living room where they sit on folding chairs and wait for the Spirit to move them. He says:

"In a town where everyone was either Lutheran or Catholic, we were neither one. We were Sanctified Brethren, a sect so tiny that nobody but us and God knew about it, so when kids asked what I was, I just said Protestant. It was too much to explain, like having six toes. You would rather keep your shoes on."

Today we celebrate the feast of the Sanctified Brethren – not a small sect in an imaginary town, but a great many men, women and children, the faithful in Christ Jesus. They are a small part of a marvellous company of believers who struggle into holiness. Among them are people who know us and love us. There will even be some from Lake Wobegon, from the places of which no one has ever heard. The Sanctified Brethren, today we salute them.

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

Special saints

by Gráinne Treanor

Living in the countryside, I often pass derelict houses on my travels. These houses evoke mixed emotions, especially during the month of November, when we remember our dead.

There is a sense of smallness and transience. I wonder about the families who lived in these houses, once homes. No doubt the pace was slower back then, but life would have been filled with the same duties, joys and sorrows we experience today.

Outside one house, a carpet of daffodils appears each spring, the planter departed. They remind me that everyone who has lived on earth has left their mark. Not all experience celebrity or sainthood. But many continue to touch our lives today through the love,

kindness, gentleness, justice, mercy and peace they lived. They shape those who follow like a "gene" that preserves the values Jesus taught in the Beatitudes. These too are "special saints" whom we cherish.

Gráinne Treanor is a mother of three and professional editor/proofreader who works from her home in the west of Ireland.

"In meeting you, may each person at least touch the beauty of God, the security of his company and the fullness of his closeness. It is a sanctity that grows as we discover that God cannot be tamed, does not need fences to defend his freedom and does not contaminate himself as he draws near."

Pope Francis

Little saints

by Michael George

When Pope Benedict visited the UK in 2010 he addressed the schoolchildren of the nation via a "Big Assembly". Like others in Catholic schools similarly unsuccessful in an attempt to secure tickets, I watched the Pope's address in a hall full of children, parents and staff, via the Internet.

The theme of the address was "Becoming Saints". God is calling each of us to holiness and to strive for sainthood.

Work in the days and weeks afterwards revealed a real understanding amongst the children that saints are born as people like them, and that whilst not easy to reach, sanctity is attainable. They – we – can become saints, through our

relationship with God, lived out through relationships with one another.

Children can often express profound ideas in simple terms. "To achieve sainthood," one ten-year-old child wrote, "Devote your life to God. Think like God. Breathe like God. Be kind. Smile. Persevere." Amen.

Michael George has served Catholic primary schools as a teacher and headteacher for more than twenty years. He now works as a lay school chaplain.

My loving Lord, touch my heart, my eyes, my mind – my whole life. Let everything that I say, think and do radiate you to the people around me. Fill my littleness with your greatness. Amen.

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

Monday:
Isaiah 25:6-9
Romans 5:5-11
Matthew 11:25-30

Tuesday:
Philippians 2:5-11
Luke 14:15-24

Wednesday:
Philippians 2:12-18
Luke 14:25-33

Thursday:
Philippians 3:3-8
Luke 15:1-10

Friday:
Philippians 3:17 – 4:1
Luke 16:1-8

Saturday:
Philippians 4:10-19
Luke 16:9-15

Next Sunday:
Wisdom 6:12-16
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Matthew 25:1-13

