

Top priority

A Year of the Word

Seize Jesus' promise

by Paul Higginson

In today's Gospel, Jesus predicts his own death. We are all on a journey towards death. I wonder what people will say about us when we are gone? Part of the answer, of course, will lie in how we have spent our life and the goals we are pursuing. Does our life revolve around our work at the expense of our relationships? Is our life about amassing nice possessions or about making as much money for ourselves and

our family as we possibly can? Do we spend our time seeking personal pleasure for ourselves without consideration of those who are in need, whether close at hand or far away? Do we live life without any thought of the environmental damage we are inflicting on the planet for future generations? Jesus asks us "what good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet lose their soul?" There is little point in pursuing wealth, material goods or fame if we end up losing our soul. We know that Jesus asks us to enter through the "narrow gate" and tread

"the narrow road that leads to life." It is often not easy – Jesus tells the disciples to "take up their cross and follow me"; but the rewards that come from discipleship are worth the struggle – it is a road that leads to the way, the truth and the life. The promise of Jesus is there for all of us to seize hold of today and make our own: "those who lose their life for my sake will find it".

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

Beyond self

by Catherine Pepinster

Being a Christian has a price. This is no comforting, easy ride. The readings today focus on the cost of discipleship, something to which that we might sometimes agree reluctantly, that we would prefer to avoid. Sometimes, out of concern for others, we would prefer them not to take the toughest route and thus not endure pain. Peter's response to the likelihood of Jesus'

suffering is to urge him to avoid it but Jesus has a path to follow and he knows it. It is a road he also urges us to follow. In so doing, we renounce the world's values and make Jesus' priorities our own. This is a selflessness that goes against natural human instinct for survival. But the day will come when we will discover the rewards that Jesus has promised. His message is constant and steeped in that promise.

Catherine Pepinster is a former editor of *The Tablet* and the author of *The Keys and the Kingdom – the British and the papacy from John Paul II to Francis*, published by T&T Clark.

A different priority

by Fr Paul Douthwaite

Life is consumed by passion. For some, their passion is the arts, for others, sports and still yet, for others, work is their passion. When you have a passion for something or someone, all else is put aside and that becomes the priority in your life. A human failing is to direct our passions to the here and now.

The disciples' passion for the earthly Jesus and his presence among them was well intentioned but Jesus rebukes and invites them to embrace a passion beyond the here and now. He powerfully redirects their passions from the temporary to the eternal.

Whilst we live in the present and enjoy the life-giving passions of

the world, Jesus calls us to extend our earthly passions to the things beyond this life. As for his first disciples, so for us he wishes us to make eternal life our priority and our passion.

Fr Paul Douthwaite is the National Catholic Chaplain for Prisons for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

"Freedom goes hand in hand with the responsibility of protecting the common good and promoting the dignity, liberty and well-being of others, reaching the poor, the excluded and future generations."

Pope Francis

Lord, if I'm honest, how often are my own comfort and convenience my top priorities? Yet love is inconvenient. Love means seeing someone else and their needs as important. Love means putting myself out for other people even when I don't want to do so. Lord, let love be my top priority in life: my love for others and your love for all of us. ☪ Amen.

Today:
Jeremiah 20:7-9
Romans 12:1-2
Matthew 16:21-27

Monday:
1 Corinthians 2:1-5
Luke 4:16-30

Tuesday:
1 Corinthians 2:10-16
Luke 4:31-37

Wednesday:
1 Corinthians 3:1-9
Luke 4:38-44

Thursday:
1 Corinthians 3:18-23
Luke 5:1-11

Thursday (E):
1 Thessalonians 2:2-8
Matthew 16:13-19

Friday:
1 Corinthians 4:1-5
Luke 5:33-39

Saturday:
1 Corinthians 4:6-15
Luke 6:1-5

Next Sunday:
Ezekiel 33:7-9
Romans 13:8-10
Matthew 18:15-20