

# SUNDAY PLUS



Take the risk

A Year of the Word

## Staying afloat



by Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

**T**he doubts that Matthew's church is experiencing are expressed movingly in today's Gospel. Jesus is praying to his Father. His followers are separated from him. It is night. They are in a boat which is battling against a heavy sea and strong winds. All seems lost. The boat clearly represents the Church, while the night storm represents the opposition the Church is facing. Jesus calls to them and tells them not to be afraid, and then he comes to them over the water. When

Peter tries to do the same as Jesus, even he is seen to begin to doubt Jesus' power and to panic. But Jesus supports him.

When Peter "felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink." Matthew tells his struggling community that even if their faith falters and they panic when they look at the surrounding danger, Jesus – even though he is with the Father – will come and save them. This is Gospel. This is good news indeed.

Peter did not have the faith to match his zeal, but Jesus supported him. That promise is extended to all who put their faith in God and in his Son,

Jesus Christ. Often when we feel that we are battling against the odds, we wonder why Jesus always seems to be off somewhere else. Although we know that we won't be asked to walk on water, we still get that sinking feeling. In that plight we are not thrown back on our resources. In this community gathered in faith, we have the word of God and the bread of life and the support of each other. That has to be enough to keep us afloat.

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications, [www.rpbooks.co.uk](http://www.rpbooks.co.uk).

## Just try!

by Siân Owen-Owen

There's no point in asking if the late Stephen Hawking might have achieved more without his wheelchair. He forged new astronomical paths and set the scene for future scientists. When most of us know little about black holes and can't understand Hawking's excitement with complicated and long mathematical equations, why did he become a household name? Was there something deeper?

People who are perfect in every way don't give us the courage to "try, try and try again" in our personal moments of shattered high hopes.

We recognise ourselves in Peter's momentary panic which stopped his miraculous watery walk towards Jesus. We admire Hawking's "can do" approach to an otherwise massively limited life. His watchword was, "Look up at the

stars and not down at your feet."

"Two men looked out of prison bars. One saw mud, the other stars."

Where do I stand? When I fall, can I hear Jesus saying, "Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid." With Jesus, I really can pick myself up and keep going.

Siân Owen-Owen is a freelance Catholic writer.

**Lord, sometimes I'm just lazy and can't be bothered taking risks, especially if I'm trying to avoid inconvenient consequences. Most of the risks that challenge me don't involve life or death situations, unlike those people who literally take their lives in their hands as they try to help others. Be with them and fill them with courage. ☕ Amen.**

## Be brave

by Daniel Kearney

Like most ordinary people I feel profoundly inadequate when I compare myself to others who have done something truly extraordinary with their life. Martin Luther King Jr., Maximilian Kolbe, Mahatma Gandhi... the list is endless. Their unstinting selflessness and courage seem far beyond my personal capabilities and bravery. Like Peter, I too would have denied Christ and cowered in the upper room with the terrified apostles.

**"When it comes to the children who come into the world, no sacrifice on the part of adults is too costly or too great, to ensure that no child believes he or she was a mistake, is worthless or is abandoned to a life of wounds and to the arrogance of men. How beautiful a society like this would be! I say that for such a society, much could be forgiven, innumerable errors. Truly a great deal."**

But should I be so hard on myself? I have been brave. I have shown resolve to fight against injustice and the selflessness to put others first, if only occasionally. But then again, no one is brave all the time. Everyone feels fear. Everyone feels afraid. Jesus was terrified in the Garden of Gethsemane but he found a way to do what he had to do. I can also take the risk and overcome my natural fears... if only for a moment.

Daniel Kearney is the author of *Adult Bullying and Childhood Bullying: caring for yourself and others*, available from Redemptorist Publications, [www.rpbooks.co.uk](http://www.rpbooks.co.uk).

Pope Francis

today:  
Kings 19:9, 11-13  
Romans 9:1-5  
Matthew 14:22-33

Monday:  
2 Corinthians  
9:6-10  
John 12:24-26

Tuesday:  
Ezekiel 2:8 – 3:4  
Matthew 18:1-5.  
10, 12-14

Wednesday:  
Ezekiel 9:1-7; 10:18-22  
Matthew 18:15-20

Thursday:  
Ezekiel 12:1-12  
Matthew 18:21 – 19:1

Friday:  
Ezekiel 16:1-15, 60, 63  
Matthew 19:3-12

Saturday:  
Ezekiel 18:1-10, 13, 30-32  
Matthew 19:13-15

Next Sunday:  
Apocalypse 11:19; 12:1-6, 10  
1 Corinthians 15:20-26  
Luke 1:39-56