

SUNDAY PLUS



Worth everything!

A Year of the Word

The authentic article



by Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

In two parables in today's Gospel, the men appreciate the true value of what they have discovered and are willing to pay the cost of everything they have for the new treasure. To outsiders looking at them, the two men might appear totally unhinged in risking everything on this one venture. But both are certain about the wisdom of what they must do; for them, the folly would be in passing over the main chance.

In the parables Jesus is asking the crowds if they perceive the kingdom of God in the same way: do they really see it as a treasure that is worth more than everything they now value in life? If the kingdom of God is not perceived as the authentic article, people will not bother renouncing anything to attain it.

None of us can gain anything of value without renouncing something. Perhaps what we have to renounce first is our perception of what real treasure in this life really is. Few of us will chance on the crock of gold at the end of the rainbow, or win a lottery, or stumble on an oilfield in the backyard. But we have all stumbled on treasure. The real treasure of life is under our noses – in the people with whom we share life; in the opportunities we face every day to exercise the values of Jesus. None of this might appear a glittering prize but it is in the heart of the ordinary that we discover the presence of Jesus. He is the authentic article. He is hidden in the commonplace, hoping that we'll stumble on that truth before long.

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

Priceless opportunities

by Daniel Kearney

Nothing seems to last. We tire easily, always looking for the next best thing. But our restlessness is not the restlessness of which St Augustine talks, ultimately finding its peace in God. It is more superficial, less fulfilling. It continually turns us away from what we possess, setting our sights on what we don't. It undermines our stability in all things by creating a sense of being dissatisfied with everything. This is an illusion, but it is difficult to resist its lure because society is repeatedly telling us that "more" is better and that "more" is what we need to be fulfilled. Such thinking can seriously damage our health. Sometimes we need to take stock of what we have and, as the saying goes, count our blessings, because it is often the case that the priceless opportunities which we

think are "out there", are, in fact, already within our grasp.

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

Loving Lord, how often do I count my blessings? What is most precious to me? What could I not live without? What is so important to me that I would willingly give up everything – even my life – to protect and defend it? Lord, if you are my dearest treasure, everything else falls into place: all those whom I love, everything I say, think and do. My Lord and my God, I love you. Amen.

Head over heels in love

by Emerald O'Hanrahan

Newly married, my husband and I arrived at St Peter's, for a blessing from Pope Francis.

When he reached us, he congratulated us and asked us to pray for him saying that he needed our prayers. He took our hands and blessed our new wedding rings and our marriage.

In all the pomp and ceremony of the Vatican, with all the guards and security, the sharp suits, glamour and riches, Pope Francis walked small: a man serving. A Jesuit. His humble walking through the world, responding to each person clamouring to see him as if they were the only ones, completely without ego – what an extraordinary model of discipleship! As newlyweds, there was no better gift: a model of humility, presence,

of love in action. Whenever I look at my wedding ring, I think not only of the best day of my life, when my husband put this symbol on my hand and we became a sacrament together, but of the humble loving presence of Pope Francis and his blessing on us both.

Emerald O'Hanrahan, actor and voice-over artist, is best known as Emma Grundy in the long-running BBC radio series, *The Archers*.

"Guard the treasure that God has given us in the Gospel. The best means to guard it is God's grace. So I ask you to keep praying, for his grace to come and enable you to guard this treasure. Let us continue, then, to let others see this treasure which God freely gave us and which we must freely offer to others."

Pope Francis

Today:
1 Kings 3:5-7-12
Romans 8:28-30
Matthew 13:44-52

Monday:
Jeremiah 13:1-11
Matthew 13:31-35

Tuesday:
Jeremiah 14:17-22
Matthew 13:36-43

Wednesday:
1 John 4:7-16
John 11:19-27
or Luke 10:38-42

Thursday:
Jeremiah 18:1-6
Matthew 13:47-53

Friday:
Jeremiah 26:1-9
Matthew 13:54-58

Saturday:
Jeremiah 26:11-16, 24
Matthew 14:1-12

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 55:1-3
Romans 8:35, 37-39
Matthew 14:13-21

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