

# SUNDAY PLUS



Strong and lovely

A Year of the Word

## The call to spiritual thirst



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In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us that there is a deeper thirst beyond the basic human need for water. This is a spiritual thirst, which only he can conquer and which, when quenched, will lead to everlasting life. Through his dialogue with the Samaritan woman Jesus tells us that God's gift of redemption is for all who thirst to know God.

It is easy to take water for granted. Often we only appreciate what we have when we go without – when we are left feeling thirsty. Physical thirst from time to time reminds us how blessed we are that this need can be relieved by turning on a tap or opening a bottle. Jesus calls us to experience spiritual thirst too, signifying a desire to grow closer to God, and a commitment to turn to God to meet our needs. Unlike the solutions to our physical needs, which are only for the present and which will not last, the solutions to our spiritual needs, found in Jesus, are eternal.

Michael George has served Catholic primary schools as a teacher and headteacher for more than twenty years.

by Michael George

**W**e can probably empathise with Jesus, walking a long distance on a hot day, at midday with the scorching sun directly overhead, stopping to rest, desperate

for a drink. We know the dryness of throat, clothes sticking to the skin, the perspiration and maybe even the light-headedness coming with the onset of dehydration. Staying hydrated is a basic human need and indeed we are called to exercise the corporal works of mercy in order to provide water to those who thirst.

## Quench your spiritual thirst

by Kasia Greenwood

We hear today in Romans that Jesus died for the ungodly, the sinners, which, of course, is something we already know. What struck me most is the point raised afterwards, that it is rare for someone to die for another and that surely one would find more justification to die for a righteous person.

If you were to die for another person, wouldn't you only do so if you thought they were worthy? Could you honestly give your life for someone who had sinned against you? This truly highlights the generosity of Jesus' sacrifice and reinforces his worldly mission mixing with sinners, tax collectors, lepers, the poor and ostracised.

We see this in the story of Jesus with the Samaritan women by the well. She collects her water in the heat of the midday sun because she is shunned by her people for her immorality. Yet Jesus chooses

to reveal his identity to her and offer her "living water". This gift of living water is for us all, so that we may quench our spiritual thirst through the love of God.

Kasia Greenwood is mother to three children and works in education.

**"Jesus loved to encounter, to make witnesses of persons who are marginalised, excluded, scorned. [The Samaritan woman] was all of these, both as a woman and a Samaritan because Samaritans were very much scorned by the Jews. But let us think of the many that Jesus wanted to meet, especially people marked by illness and disability, in order to heal them and restore them to full dignity."**

Pope Francis

## Thirsting for more

by Dr Liam Waldron

In today's readings, we hear about human needs and how God can satisfy them. A thirst or hunger for something is more than a mere desire for it – it is something which must be satisfied in order to survive.

The stories of the Israelites in the desert and of the Samaritan woman both tell of people struggling to live well and grow. In the Gospel reading, Jesus recognises the woman as a woman first although she is a Samaritan. He crosses a societal boundary not only in order to speak to her but also to offer her something extraordinary, to the extent that it will both change and save her life. She comes to believe that what is being offered is life-giving, so much so that she cannot keep it to herself.

In our own time, we frequently encounter the "other", in the way that the Samaritan woman was "other". Their thirst for life-giving

friendship challenges us to see the person in need first, move beyond the limitations, and respond in love.

*Intellectual disability: caring for yourself and others*, which Dr Liam Waldron co-wrote with Cristina Gangemi, is available from Redemptorist Publications, [www.rpbooks.co.uk](http://www.rpbooks.co.uk)

**Compassionate Lord, touch and fill with hope the hearts of all victims of discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion. Help those who cause hurt to recognise the pain which they inflict, sometimes deliberately and sometimes unknowingly. Teach me to be compassionate and understanding; to see other people with your eyes; to encourage kindness and cooperation. Amen.**

Today:  
Exodus 17:3-7  
Romans 5:1-2, 5-8  
John 4:5-42

Monday:  
2 Kings 5:1-15  
Luke 4:24-30

Tuesday:  
Daniel 3:25, 34-43  
Matthew 18:21-35

Tuesday (E&S):  
St Patrick (Feast):  
1 Peter 4:7-11;  
Luke 5:1-11

Wednesday:  
Deuteronomy  
4:1, 5-9  
Matthew 5:17-19

Thursday:  
2 Samuel 7:4-5, 12-14, 16  
Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22  
Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24  
or Luke 2:41-51

Friday:  
Hosea 14:2-10  
Mark 12:28-34

Saturday:  
Hosea 5:15 – 6:6  
Luke 18:9-14

Next Sunday:  
1 Samuel 16:1,  
6-7, 10-13  
Ephesians 5:8-14  
John 9:1-41

