

SUNDAY PLUS



Overworked and underpaid?

A Year of the Word

Work with a different flavour

by Phil Ferguson

He stood in the Victoria and Albert Museum in front of a large wooden carving of the crucifixion, tears streaming down his face. Concerned for the stranger, Katie approached him and asked if he was alright. "I'm sorry", he replied. "I'm a woodcarver and I've just seen this for the first time. I couldn't help myself. I was so moved that the tears just started. It's so beautiful and there is so much work in it."

Katie was intrigued. Obviously, the woodcarver could see much more deeply into

his own craft than she could ever hope to appreciate.

"How long would it take to make this?" she asked. "I don't know," he replied. "It would take me at least six months, working for several hours each day."

Work takes on a whole different flavour when you are working on something or for someone you love. Few people enthuse about the moments spent in washing dishes or sorting out the wheelie bins. Yet they might spend countless hours digging the garden, arranging flowers or preparing a meal and think nothing of it. Yes, it's hard work but not oppressive and it's a

different sort of tiredness at the end of the day.

Jesus invited us to go to him when we feel overburdened with care and perhaps joyless. Few people can make a career out of their hobby. Some people have very boring jobs, perhaps fulfilling menial tasks which the rest of us escape. May God bless them and help them to smile through their work.

Phil Ferguson is a former teacher.

Make space

by Siân Owen-Owen

A sixth form college car park attendant watched as a youngster parked his vehicle. "They're poor little rich kids. They've all got their own cars, some of them very expensive. Their parents spend a small fortune, overloading those kids with everything they could materially want. They have money I couldn't have imagined when I was their age – but their parents are too busy to give their children time and attention. They think that splashing the cash will keep them happy, but it's not enough. Those kids need real love."

St Teresa of Calcutta declared, "If you want to change the world, go home and love your family." In time to come, children won't thank you for impressive company profits, but they will never forget a few words of genuine praise and encouragement. They will always

remember those few minutes of family fun and laughter.

The best families are those in which everybody makes space for each other.

Siân Owen-Owen is the eldest of eight children and proudly boasts that her brothers and sisters have always been her "best friends".

Loving Lord, I've often felt overburdened and unappreciated for all that I've done. Help me, Lord, to give without counting the cost. Be with those people who really are overworked and underpaid. Let them find justice, compassion and understanding.
 Amen.

"Too often the effects of a life worn down by precarious and underpaid work, unsustainable hours, bad transport rebound on the children... Children also pay the price for immature unions and irresponsible separations: they are the first victims; they suffer the outcome of a culture of exaggerated individual rights, and then the children become more precocious. They often absorb the violence they are not able to 'ward off'."

Pope Francis

Make time

by Michael George

One of the topics I most enjoy teaching involves learning to draw with perspective. Over the course of a series of lessons children learn that they can transform their drawings of a room or a landscape from flat two-dimensional images to vibrant and realistic three-dimensional spaces. It is exciting learning.

In today's Gospel, Jesus instructs us with imperative language: "Come to me," and "Take my yoke". Unequivocally,

Jesus promises to help us with our burdens. He promises us the gift of time and space. This gift is to enable us to experience the Spirit working within us. The Spirit is always there, but only in the rest and peace given by Jesus can we feel the Spirit's power and be guided by the Spirit's light. The rest Jesus promises gives us that same complete, realistic three-dimensional perspective as children with their drawings – to see ourselves as we fully are.

Following more than twenty years as a teacher and headteacher, Michael George has recently started work as a lay school chaplain.

Today:
Zechariah 9:9-10
Romans 8:9, 11-13
Matthew 11:25-30

Monday:
Hosea 2:16-18, 21-22
Matthew 9:18-26

Tuesday:
Hosea 8:4-7, 11-13
Matthew 9:32-38

Wednesday:
Hosea 10:1-3, 7-8, 12
Matthew 10:1-7

Thursday:
Hosea 11:1-4, 8-9
Matthew 10:7-15

Friday:
Hosea 14:2-10
Matthew 10:16-23

Saturday:
Isaiah 6:1-8
Matthew 10:24-33

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 55:10-11
Romans 8:18-23
Matthew 13:1-23