

SUNDAY PLUS

Love each other

Encouraging change

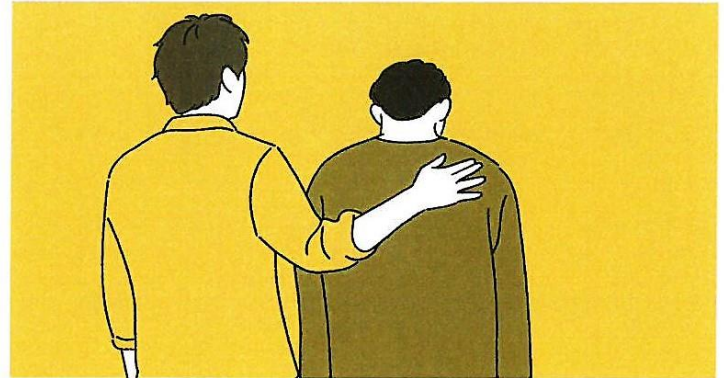
By Fr Denis McBride
C.Ss.R.

All the readings today share a marvellous insight: people begin to change when they are encouraged to see the best in themselves, not when they are asked to dwell with the worst in themselves. Simply to tell people what is wrong with them and leave it at that can be to leave them a wreck. It's like leaving the scene of an accident. And people rarely change when they are left to themselves, enclosed in their own weakness, staring at their own mistakes. That's a lonely project precisely because there is no one

to care whether change takes place or not.


In all this we need each other's help and encouragement. To change we need others prodding us on: "Go on! You can do it!" We need to call out the best in each other like Paul does with his converts, and rejoice with people in the changes they have made for the better. After all, Paul himself had to make big changes in his life, and it was the Philippians who gave him encouragement in his big change by accepting him as an apostle of the Lord.

If our community is to be constantly converted to the Lord, we all must breathe in encouragement and breathe it out. Perhaps this



Advent we could exercise that encouragement in a simple, practical way. That will be a change for the better. In the words of Cardinal Newman: "To be human is to change. To be perfect is to have changed often."

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

Dearest Jesus, show me how I might change for the better so that everything I say, think and do might reflect your love.  Amen.

Christ be with me

Christ be with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in the eye that sees me,
Christ in the ear that hears me.

St Patrick

"The Lord knocks on our door, he knocks on our heart to enter into friendship with us, in communion, to give us salvation... The uncontaminated beauty of our Mother is incomparable, but at the same time it attracts us. Let us entrust ourselves to her and say 'no' to sin and 'yes' to grace once and for all."

Pope Francis

Feast of the week Wednesday 8 December The Immaculate Conception of Our Lady

The beautiful lady revealed her identity in the words, "I am the Immaculate Conception." It was 25 March 1858 and the sixteenth time that Bernadette Soubirous had visited Massabielle on the outskirts of Lourdes. She didn't know that, on 8 December 1854, Pope Pius IX's declaration of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, had stated that, as the Mother of God-to-be, Mary was conceived free from the effects of original sin.

Bernadette described the first apparition on 11 February, saying, "I came back towards the grotto and started taking off my stockings. I had hardly taken off the first stocking when I heard a sound like a gust of

wind... As I raised my head to look at the grotto, I saw a lady dressed in white, wearing a white dress, a blue girdle and a yellow rose on each foot, the same colour as the chain of her rosary; the beads of the rosary were white... From the niche, or rather the dark alcove behind it, came a dazzling light..."

On 25 February the lady told Bernadette "to drink of the water of the spring, to wash in it and to eat the herb that grew there," as an act of penance. Since the next day and continuing until today, clear water has flowed beside the grotto.

On 2 March, at the thirteenth apparition, the lady said that "a chapel should be built, and a procession formed".

Of her last visit to the Grotto on 16 July, Bernadette declared, "I have never seen her so beautiful before." *The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes is now one of the world's most important Catholic pilgrimage sites.*

Today:
Baruch 5:1-9
Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11
Luke 3:1-6

Monday:
Isaiah 35:1-10
Luke 5:17-26

Tuesday:
Isaiah 40:1-11
Matthew 18:12-14

Wednesday:
Genesis 3:9-15, 20
Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12
Luke 1:26-38

Thursday:
Isaiah 41:13-20
Matthew 11:11-15

Friday:
Isaiah 48:17-19
Matthew 11:16-19

Saturday:
Ecclesiasticus 48:1-4, 9-11
Matthew 17:10-13

Next Sunday:
Zephaniah 3:14-18
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:10-18