

SUNDAY PLUS

Prioritise!

Forgiving readily

by Fr Denis McBride
C.Ss.R.

We rarely think of a God who gets depressed at our hardened attitudes, whose good mood changes to sadness when seeing how mean we are with the forgiveness God offers so generously. In today's second reading Paul tells us how not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

Paul was the one who had grieved the Holy Spirit. He was the man who persecuted Christ by hunting down the disciples with military precision and determination, chasing them

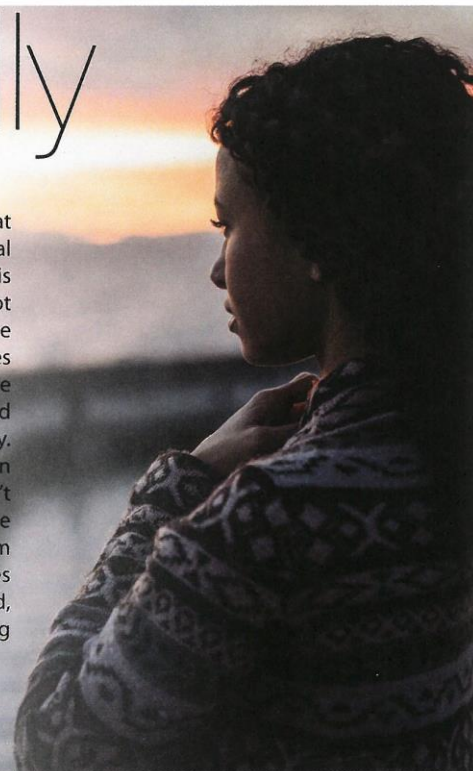
into foreign cities, arranging their trials and attending their executions. Paul was committed to the violent oppression of the infant Christian community until he was confronted with a large paradox – the forgiveness of the one he was persecuting. The persecuted Christ forgave him readily. That experience overwhelmed Paul; it turned his life around; it gave him a sense of his own worth stronger than the sense of his own sin.


Paul hoped that other Christians could come to the same truth that he had experienced.

The hurt God who forgave Paul did not delight in Paul's wrongdoing nor fasten onto his wrongdoing.

Our faith tells us that God has made an eternal habit of forgiveness; God is a professional forgiver, not least because there have been lots of opportunities for practice. The only way we can become accomplished forgivers is to forgive readily. Practice makes perfect. When we forgive readily, we don't hoard hurt and grudges, we don't assemble a junk-room of spitefulness. Not only does that keep our lives uncluttered, it is also a sure way of cheering up the Holy Spirit of God

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



Loving Lord, it's so easy to grumble when things don't go in the way I would like. Help me to be more patient and understanding.  Amen.

Grumbles galore...

by Sr Penny Roker RSM

I've heard a fair bit of grumbling in my time – it's the counsellor's lot! Often, it is no more than an expression of anxiety. It is natural to assume that things have gone disastrously wrong when they turn out differently from what we expect. We hear how the exhausted Elijah succumbed to that kind of "catastrophising". God prescribed him a good rest and plenty of "TLC"!

People often grumble about

change, too. New things arouse our suspicions. Faith, however, is the antidote to fear. When the Galileans took umbrage at Jesus' straggling teaching, he told them to stop grumbling and start believing instead!

Learning to trust can be freeing. Believing that God has the best in store for us helps us cope with life's challenges. It opens us to joy. "Taste and see", says the psalmist. Savour every moment and you will come to see that, yes, the Lord is good!

Sr Penny Roker, a Sister of Mercy, counsellor and writer, is a regular contributor to *Living Word* and *Weekday Living Word*. See www.rpbooks.co.uk

"I cannot imagine a Christian who does not know how to smile. May we joyfully witness to our faith."

Pope Francis

Home-made and heavenly

by Claire Wright

I love to be reminded of the human needs of Jesus. He was, after all, human. He slept, he sought rest and solitude, he spent time with friends laughing and building community and family, he ate and drank.

Jesus always looked out for the human needs of those who followed him. He cooked for them, cleaned their feet, provided them with rest and food when the journey got too much.

Jesus "gets it". He gets what it is to be exhausted, to be hungry and disgruntled from everything going on in your life. He won't be upset or not understand if you need to tell him you are fed up, weary and in need of a rest.

Elijah knew this:

"I have had enough, Lord," [Elijah] said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." (1 Kings 19:4-5)

Sometimes I need that reminder, don't you? To stop, cry out to God, and then take a moment to look after the body God gave me. To rest, eat healthily, seek friendship. This honesty with God and tending to human needs go hand-in-hand, giving my body the physical bread it needs, and giving my soul the spiritual bread for which it longs.

Prayer isn't just something we do in church, or on our knees. It is lived out every day in the little things we do, in the ways we look out for others and ourselves, in bringing God into everything, even the simple acts of rest, food and friendship.

Claire Wright is a Brighton-based freelance writer who runs a faith blog and a healthy family food website.

Today:
1 Kings 19:4-8
Ephesians 4:30 – 5:2
John 6:41-51

Monday:
Deuteronomy 10:12-22
Matthew 17:22-27

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

Wednesday:
Deuteronomy 34:1-12
Matthew 18:15-20

Thursday:
Joshua 3:7-11, 13-17
Matthew 18:21 – 19:1

Friday:
Joshua 24:1-13
Matthew 19:3-12

Saturday:
Joshua 24:14-29
Matthew 19:13-15

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

