

SUNDAY PLUS

King of hearts

At home with the Lord



Image: Lake Bunyonyi, Uganda.
Pygmy people are ancient dwellers in the forests.
Travel Stock / Shutterstock.com

by Eldred Willey

“Open to me the gates of heaven, brother.” Being of a cheerful disposition himself, Père Richard did not want to sadden the negligent lay brother who had accidentally locked him out of the refectory. Born in Angola, Richard had joined the Sacred Heart Fathers and picked up a certain finesse in Europe, where he trained. Then he was transplanted like the cedar sprig in the first reading to the jungles of Congo, where he developed a ministry to the indigenous pygmy peoples.

Like the shoot of the mustard seed in today's Gospel he had to push through the darkness in search of sunshine. Long after every NGO had given up the rainy season roads as a lost cause, he would continue riding his motorbike through

the quagmire to remote Mass stations, returning plastered to the waist in mud. He provided food, clothing and education for the malnourished pygmy children, only to be billed by a delegation of parents for their lost labour force. Yet he remained their advocate: why call them sub-human, he asked, just because they adhere to their own culture?

The rattling of the motorbike handles gradually shook apart his wrists until he found himself lying in the mission station in need of prayer and with injuries which no doctor in central Africa seemed to have the skill to treat. What a witness from missionary priests, already half-exiled from the body but at home with the Lord, opening for all of us the gates of heaven!

Eldred Willey works as a communications officer for the Diocese of East Anglia.

Unexpected places

By Linda Jones

I admit I don't know what a mustard seed looks like, and I've never tried to grow one. I did grow a lot of tomatoes this year and found that either I had none at all because they were taking ages to ripen, or so many I had to ask the neighbours to take some off my hands!

Jesus is talking to the disciples about the kingdom of God. He tries different images to help them understand. Many of those images are agricultural, because that's what life was like then.

What would our own world look like if we truly believed that the kingdom of God is in our own here and now? There would be

good news for the poor – a fairer world. There would be healing – broken hearts would mend. There would be abundance – plenty for everyone. No one would be crushed, left out or discriminated against.

What could we do now to make this kind of world more likely?

Linda Jones is head of the CAFOD Theology Programme and a regular contributor to Redemptorist Publications' *Living Word* and *Weekday Living Word*.

Lord, King and centre of our hearts, make my heart your throne. Help me to spread your kingdom of love wherever you lead me.
✚ Amen.

Unexpected people

by James Gallogly

It's 22 March 2020 BC - Before Covid. 32 men have attended Mass at the prison chapel. It is one of the places they look for answers in their lives. 197 other Catholics, who could have attended, chose not to join in.

Fast forward five months. 84 men are signed up to receive the Sunday Mass sheets. It is one of the places they look for answers in their lives.

They engage with the Sunday Mass readings and liturgy. They have a short homily to read and upon which to reflect. They have examples of prayer forms, lives of the saints or a regular letter of hope

from a Missionary of Charity. He is in his own prison, albeit outside the gates: HMP Isolation.

This growth in interest is a positive light in the darkness of the last few months. It is a grace in a time of bleakness. Who knows what answers will be found there?

James Gallogly is a Catholic lay chaplain in a UK prison.

“We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace.”

Pope Francis

Today:
Ezekiel 17:22-24
2 Corinthians 5:6-10
Mark 4:26-34

Monday:
2 Corinthians 6:1-10
Matthew 5:38-42

Tuesday:
2 Corinthians 8:1-9
Matthew 5:43-48

Wednesday:
2 Corinthians 9:6-11
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday:
2 Corinthians 11:1-11
Matthew 6:7-15

Friday:
2 Corinthians 11:18, 21-30
Matthew 6:19-23

Saturday:
2 Corinthians 12:1-10
Matthew 6:24-34

Next Sunday:
Job 38:1, 8-11
2 Corinthians 5:14-17
Mark 4:35-41