

SUNDAY PLUS

Follow Jesus

Would we bother?

By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

With the skill of long practice, the fishermen pull their boat into shore and unload their catch. It's tiring, heavy, repetitive work, hauling wet, slippery fish from the deck to where they can be sorted for market. The unloading is made more difficult by a crowd of impatient would-be buyers who don't want to wait until the catch is offloaded. If the boat has been out overnight, even the most experienced fishermen long for the comfort of their own bed and the necessary few hours of sleep before again setting sail.

In a fishing community, the

boat defines membership and status, showing that its owner can provide for his family. Everyone in the village knows the ownership of each boat. The boat is a fisherman's most valuable possession: it means everything.

Jesus invited fishermen to join him, meeting them on their own terms without any big show. He was talking about discipleship, not a fan club, promising, not fame and fortune, but a stone for a pillow and the wilderness as a palace. He knew what the boat meant to each potential disciple and that his invitation to leave everything behind to

follow him was a very big deal for each man – and for his family.

Following Jesus still impacts both the individual who feels called and their family members who walk different paths. It is not easy – but anything which is worthwhile is likely to have its challenges. Family life, career, relationships... We all know that there are tests to embrace along the way, but if everything were easy, would we appreciate it? If following Jesus needed neither effort nor commitment, would we bother?

Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.



Put out into deep water

By James Gallogly

Simon's "we worked all night and caught nothing" is said in utter despair. Can the master be serious? He was the son of a carpenter not a fisherman!

Yet Simon and the others trusted and, lo and behold, the catch is extraordinary. Do we trust when the going looks bleak, when the challenge is overwhelming? When life has hit rock bottom and there appears no reason to go on Jesus encourages us to, "put out into deep water."

I watch in awe and wonder as men who have been on a path of self-destruction for countless years humbly shrug like Simon and take a step into the unknown. My colleagues and I offer endless encouragement to help them as they seek a new way of living. When it happens, we know that the grace of the Holy Spirit is again at work. We can only marvel and help with the catch.

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

"God always calls. And the greatest joy for every believer is to respond to this call, offering one's entire being to the service of God and our brothers and sisters."

Pope Francis

Feast of the week
Tuesday 8 February

St Josephine Bakhita (1869-1947)

"If I was to meet those slave raiders that abducted me and those who tortured me, I'd kneel down to them to kiss their hands, because, if it had not have been for them, I would not have become a Christian and religious woman."

St Josephine Bakhita, the patron saint of her native Sudan and of the survivors of human trafficking, was abducted as a child and during the next twelve years, was so mistreated

that she even forgot her name. Her captors called her "Bakhita" and forced her conversion to Islam.

Yet even as an abused child, she experienced God without ever knowing God's identity. She said, "Seeing the sun, the moon and the stars, I said to myself: Who could be the master of these beautiful things? And I felt a great desire to see him, to know him and to pay him homage..."

Eventually, Bakhita found freedom, was baptised Josephine and became a Canossian Sister. Before her death she declared, "The whole of my life has been God's gift."

St Josephine Bakhita, you were sold into slavery as a child and endured untold hardship and suffering. Help all those who are trapped as slaves. May God release them from their captivity. Comfort the survivors of slavery and human trafficking. Let them see you as an example of hope and faith. Help them to find healing. Pray for the people amongst us who are enslaved in any way. Amen.

Today:
Isaiah 6:1-8
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Luke 5:1-11

Monday:
1 Kings 8:1-7, 9-13
Mark 6:53-56

Tuesday:
1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30
Mark 7:1-13

Wednesday:
1 Kings 10:1-10
Mark 7:14-23

Thursday:
1 Kings 11:4-13
Mark 7:24-30

Friday:
1 Kings 11:29-32; 12:1-9
Mark 7:31-37

Saturday:
1 Kings 12:26-32; 13:33-34
Mark 8:1-10

Next Sunday:
Jeremiah 17:5-8
1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20
Luke 6:17, 20-26

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PUBLICATIONS

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