

SUNDAY PLUS

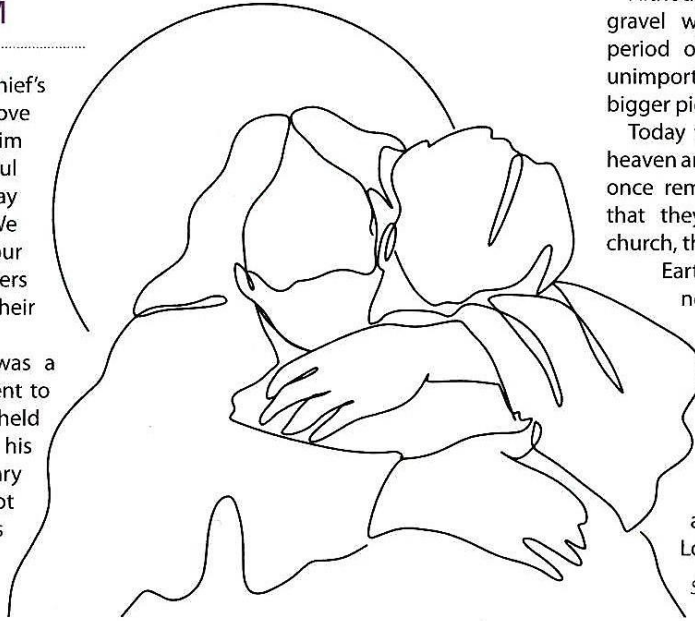
King of hearts

There's a difference

By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

When we reach the chief's compound, we'll have to remove our sandals and approach him barefoot. We must stay at a respectful distance, kneel before him and stay kneeling throughout the audience. We must also give three claps to show our respect. This chief is enlightened: others insist that visitors lie on the ground at their feet."

As it happened, our local chief was a Senior Chief, with six others subservient to him. He had little education but was held in enormous respect, not because of his personality but because of his hereditary position. The gestures honoured, not him as a private individual, but him as a local ruler who embodied centuries of inherited history, tradition, culture, wisdom, governance and leadership.



Although walking barefoot and kneeling on gravel was decidedly uncomfortable, for the period of the audience, my sore knees were unimportant: I was a jigsaw piece in a much bigger picture.

Today we celebrate Jesus, not only as king of heaven and earth, but also as God. A non-Christian once remarked that if Christians truly believed that they approached God when entering a church, they would enter on their knees.

Earthly chiefs demand respect for their nobility. They expect reverence but don't ask to be loved.

Jesus is no Senior, nor even a Paramount, Chief. He asks to be the king and centre of our hearts. We approach him as we are, warts and all. Jesus gives and receives love – a love which ennobles the person who approaches him. There's a difference. Love changes everything.

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It is true, he was a thief, he was a crook, he had stolen things throughout his life. But in the end, he regretted what he had done, and, seeing Jesus, so good and merciful, he managed to steal Heaven: he is a great thief, this man. The good thief finally addresses Jesus directly, invoking his help:

"Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power". He calls him by name, "Jesus", with confidence, and thus confesses what that name means: "the Lord saves": this is what the

name "Jesus" means. That man asks Jesus to remember him. There is so much tenderness in this expression, so much humanity! It is the need of the human being not to be forsaken; that God may be always near. In this way a man condemned to death becomes an example, a model for a man, for a Christian who trusts in Jesus; and also a model of the Church who invokes the Lord so often in the liturgy, saying: "Remember... Remember your love...".

Pope Francis

Feast of the week
Tuesday 22 November


St Cecilia
(200-230 AD)

"I'm Flavia, Cecilia's friend. Her husband Valerian died first. He wasn't a Christian before he met Cecilia, but through her influence converted to Christianity and was martyred yesterday. When it came to Cecilia, the executioner botched her execution and ran away, leaving her on the scaffold erected outside her home. We

carried her indoors and cared for her until she died three days later. Cecilia bequeathed everything that she and Valerian had to the poor.

How will I remember Cecilia? Her life was a love song. Music filled her days, regardless of what was happening. In good times and bad, Cecilia sang! She taught us that music can often say what is too deep for words. As someone will say in your time rather than mine, 'Music is love in search of a word'. Find your song and sing it."

Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

Loving Lord, today we pray for children and young people, that you might fill them with your laughter, enthusiasm and joy. Watch over, bless and protect them.  Amen.

Today:
2 Samuel 5:1-3
Colossians 1:12-20
Luke 23:35-43

Monday:
Apocalypse 14:1-5
Luke 21:1-4

Tuesday:
Apocalypse 14:14-19
Luke 21:5-11

Wednesday:
Apocalypse 15:1-4
Luke 21:12-19

Thursday:
Apocalypse 18:1-2,
21-23; 19:1-3, 9
Luke 21:20-28

Friday:
Apocalypse 20:1-4,
11 - 21:2
Luke 21:29-33

Saturday:
Apocalypse 22:1-7
Luke 21:34-36

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 2:1-5
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:37-44