

# SUNDAY PLUS

Look ahead



## God's time

By Michael George

**W**e would feel lost without a clock or calendar. Time measures how we spend our lives and gives us an organisational framework. It helps to know what is coming up and when.

For all its helpfulness, though, awareness of time can result in pressure. Whether a time limit in an exam or an urgent deadline to be met, time can be a source of stress. For stress to be healthy, it must be managed.

At school we stopped the use of the automatic bell during the school day. This was not because we were unconcerned about punctuality, but rather because we did not want that indicator of time causing unnecessary interruption or tension: if the bell sounded in the middle of class prayer

or during a test, for example. Stopping the bell was a simple stress-relief mechanism, which resulted in more focus and a more peaceful environment.

In today's Gospel Jesus reminds us that we live in God's time. We are aware of the passage of time, as marked on a clock or in a calendar, but it is God who is in control.

We are told to be ready, but we need not be fearful, for Jesus has equipped us with stress-relieving tools to enable us to look forward to the future with confidence.

God loves us. God is love. We are awake and ready when we embrace this knowledge in faith and free ourselves from our own distracting bells, focussing wholeheartedly on loving God and loving one another.

*Michael George has served Catholic primary schools as a teacher and headteacher for more than twenty years.*

## The symbolism of the Advent wreath

By William Saunders

The symbolism of the Advent wreath is beautiful. The wreath is made of various evergreens, signifying continuous life. Even these evergreens have a traditional meaning which can be adapted to our faith: the laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering; pine, holly and yew immortality; and cedar strength and healing. Holly also has a special Christian symbolism: the prickly leaves remind us of

the crown of thorns and one English legend tells of how the cross was made of holly. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolises the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul and the everlasting life found in Christ. Any pine cones, nuts or seedpods used to decorate the wreath also symbolise life and resurrection. The wreath of evergreens depicts the immortality of our soul and the new, everlasting life promised to us through Christ, the eternal Word of the Father, who entered our world becoming true man and who was victorious over sin and death through his own passion, death and resurrection.

*Rev. William Saunders, Catholic Education Resource Centre, Arlington, USA*

Let us not ignore God's word. It is a love letter, written to us by the One who knows us best. In reading it, we again hear his voice, see his face and receive his Spirit. That word

brings us close to God. Let us not keep it at arm's length, but carry it with us always, in our pocket, on our phone. Let us give it a worthy place in our homes.

Pope Francis

Feast of the week  
Wednesday 30 November  
St Andrew



### St Andrew's prayer


Glorious St Andrew, you were the first to recognise and follow the Son of God.

With your friend, St John, you remained with Jesus for your entire life and now, throughout eternity.

Just as you led your brother, St Peter, to Christ and many others after him, draw us also to him.

Teach us how to lead them, solely out of love for Jesus and dedication to his service.

Help us to learn the lesson of the cross and carry our daily crosses without complaint, so that they may carry us to God the Almighty Father. Amen.

Loving Lord, as Advent begins, let me prepare for Christmas by trying to do one kind act each day. Let my heart be wide awake to your presence in my life.  Amen.

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

Monday:  
Isaiah 4:2-6  
Matthew 8:5-11

Tuesday:  
Isaiah 11:1-10  
Luke 10:21-24

Wednesday:  
Romans 10:9-18  
Matthew 4:18-22

Scotland (Solemnity)  
Wisdom 3:1-9  
Romans 10:9-18  
Matthew 4:18-22

Thursday:  
Isaiah 26:1-6  
Matthew 7:21, 24-27

Friday:  
Isaiah 29:17-24  
Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday:  
Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26  
Matthew 9:35 - 10:1, 6-8

Next Sunday:  
Isaiah 11:1-10  
Romans 15:4-9  
Matthew 3:1-12