

SUNDAY PLUS

See and believe

Strong as death



By Brian Fahy

The priest stood beside his father's grave, his mother by his side.

As they stood there remembering "the old man", suddenly his mother said to him, "Do you think there really is a life after death?" The priest was taken aback by this question and more so by the identity of the questioner. Here was his very own mother, the person at whose knee

faith had come to him, and she was doubting. It was the first time he had ever heard her give voice to such a feeling.

Death is a stunning event however and whenever it occurs – it can take the ground from under us. One minute all is light and goodness, the next all is dark and sorrowful. The vicious death of Jesus was a total disaster to his friends: all that bright hope brought to such an ignominious conclusion. None of the disciples could believe

the story of risen life that the women brought to them. Thomas merely confirmed what we all so often feel. It is the end of everything.

Thomas' genuine doubt and refusal to believe speaks for us in the days of our darkness. His act of faith – "My Lord and my God!" – equally speaks for us so that we too may believe and emerge from the dark sorrows of this world. That priest's mother emerged from the sadness of her bereavement and her faith in the Lord shone bright again until her own dying day.

Brian Fahy describes himself as an "apprentice poet". His website is to be found at www.errispoetry.com.

Despite the darkness

By James Gallogly

Mary Magdalene sought the Lord "while it was still dark". I suspect we too do a lot of our searching in a similar gloom, unable to see clearly, unsure of our direction. The disciples are again in the dark: they always seem out of step, a bit lost. An empty tomb, what next?

"Mary", a name was all that was needed. He is alive! He has broken through the despair; he has conquered death.

At cell doors there can be much darkness, be it confusion, despair or anger. A cloud of darkness seems to hover. Yet a hopeful presence can offer light. A gently spoken name gives hope. An invitation can provide a lifeline. Time in a sacred space can roll away the stone.

Resurrection awaits at the end of our search when we finally understand the love of our risen Saviour in our lives, when his peace is accepted.

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

Feast of the week
Sunday 16 April

St Bernadette
of Lourdes
(1844-1879)

St Bernadette had asthma. Interestingly, her biographers mention that she suffered from the condition before meeting Our Lady at the rock of Massabielle in Lourdes – and are silent about any adult asthma attacks. Did she grow out of it? Did Bernadette herself receive the first cure when she obeyed Our Lady's instructions to bathe her face in the muddy pool, which became the miraculous spring and future


pilgrimage destination of millions of people? Was it such a normal part of her life that biographers overlook asthma when writing about Bernadette's other health issues which led to her death at the age of thirty-five?

Anybody who is familiar with asthma, either personally or through a family member, knows the limitations on activities – including allergenic foods – and freedoms which everybody else enjoys.

As we remember St Bernadette, perhaps it is also an opportunity to remember and pray for all those who suffer from asthma.

Only God can give us true happiness: it is useless to waste our time seeking it elsewhere, in wealth, in pleasure, in power, in a career... The kingdom of God is the realisation of all our aspirations because at the same time, it is the salvation of humanity and the glory of God.

Pope Francis

Lord of love, help me to look for happiness in the right places. Help me to be realistic in my hopes and dreams. May I find my happiness in loving you.  Amen.

Today:
Acts 2:42-47
1 Peter 1:3-9
John 20:19-31

Monday:
Acts 4:23-31
John 3:1-8

Tuesday:
Acts 4:32-37
John 3:7-15

Wednesday:
Acts 5:17-26
John 3:16-21

Thursday:
Acts 5:27-33
John 3:31-36

Friday:
Acts 5:34-42
John 6:1-15

Saturday:
Acts 6:1-7
John 6:16-21

Next Sunday:
Acts 2:14, 22-33
1 Peter 1:17-21
Luke 24:13-35