

SUNDAY PLUS

The extra mile

It's worth it



By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

And while you're at it, could you just...?" And so, a small favour becomes an unforeseen and ever-extending list, perhaps changing cheerful goodwill into impatient resentment. A "couple of tomatoes" grows into an entire shopping list which extends from the supermarket to "the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker".

Jesus knew what he was saying when he asked us to go, not just the one mile but an extra one into the bargain. Personal time and energy are precious commodities which we don't always want to share. Unfortunately, my "to do" list can always extend to fill every available moment so adding your catalogue of requirements to mine risks stressing me out to the same extent that you feel relieved of your burdens. Life isn't easy, is it?

Neither was Jesus literally suggesting that, in conflict situations, I should offer my face to be slapped twice rather than once. Sometimes self-defence is not only useful: it's an essential. Jesus wants me, however, to try harder at making peace. It's often good to take a deep breath and avoid harsh words which can't be retracted.

The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu declared, "If you want peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies." He understood the meaning of today's Gospel reading which, in many ways, summarises the entire Gospel. We're called to be peacemakers. We're invited to be generous with our resources. We're challenged to build bridges and to nurture relationships. If that means walking the extra mile, it's worth it, isn't it?

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

Dearest Jesus, teach me to be generous and to share myself with others. Most importantly, let me share my time so that I am not a hoarder of all the good things in life. Amen.

The extra mile

By Brian Fahy

After a week of lecturing in the monastery, Sr Clare was leaving to drive south. She came up four flights of stairs to find me in the attic and to say farewell. "Have you come up all this way just to say goodbye to me?" I asked her in surprise. Her simple reply was "yes". I was amazed. It is a good climb. I have never forgotten it, or the effect it had on me.

Taking people by surprise with gifts or with goodness is a happy thing to do. Special occasions demand it. Christmas and birthdays are important occasions to remember. We give gifts and the person feels important and appreciated.

My grandson, Noah, only two, loves for me to put him in the laundry basket for "hide and seek". I know where he is. He knows I know, but the joy on his face in being found steals my heart away.

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

A merciful heart can go out and meet others; it is ready to embrace everyone.

A merciful heart is able to be a place of refuge for those who are without a home or have lost their home; it is able to build a home and a family for those forced to emigrate; it knows the meaning of tenderness and compassion. A merciful heart can share its bread with the hungry and welcome refugees and migrants.

Pope Francis

Feast of the week Wednesday 22 February Ash Wednesday

To Keep a True Lent

Is this a fast, to keep
The larger lean?
And clean
From fat of veals and sheep?
Is it to quit the dish
Of flesh, yet still
To fill
The platter high with fish?
Is it to fast an hour,
Or ragged to go,
Or show
A downcast look and sour?
No; 'tis a fast to dole
Thy sheaf of wheat,
And meat,
Unto the hungry soul.
It is to fast from strife,
From old debate
And hate;
To circumsise thy life.
To show a heart grief-rent;
To starve thy sin,
Not bin;
And that's to keep thy Lent.

Robert Herrick

Today:
Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18
1 Corinthians 3:16-23
Matthew 5:38-48

Monday:
Ecclesiasticus 1:1-10
Mark 9:14-29

Tuesday:
Ecclesiasticus 2:1-13
Mark 9:30-37

Wednesday:
Joel 2:12-18
2 Corinthians 5:20 - 6:2
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday:
Deuteronomy 30:15-20
Luke 9:22-25

Friday:
Isaiah 58:1-9
Matthew 9:14-15

Saturday:
Isaiah 58:9-14
Luke 5:27-32

Next Sunday:
Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7
Romans 5:12-19
Matthew 4:1-11