

SUNDAY PLUS

Wait!



Bishop Joseph Dupont, one of the first missionaries to Mashitolo.

What is your legacy?

by Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

Let me guess. You have never heard of Mashitolo. Even Googling the small Zambian village draws a blank. Yet villagers point to a large tree, growing alongside Lake Chifunabuli (which does appear on Google). “That’s where they landed and camped overnight.”

“They” were Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers). In the late nineteenth century, they braved the vastness of Lake Bangweulu and

the crocodile-infested waters of Lake Chifunabuli, becoming the first foreigners to visit Mashitolo and the ‘Ngunbo people.

More than a century later, in the annual Kwanga ceremony, the local ‘Ngunbo chiefs and their villagers celebrate the coming of Christianity to the area through the work of the future Bishop Joseph Dupont and his companions.

In today’s Gospel we read of John the Baptist urging

his listeners to “prepare a way for the Lord”. His was a risky business. People were familiar with itinerant preachers. Baptism as a symbol of cleansing was nothing particularly new. They expected the long-awaited Messiah – but tomorrow and not today. Today’s demands were heavier than they wanted – especially for Herod. In becoming a voice in the wilderness, John literally took his life in his hands.

Making changes demands readiness to take risks and waiting for results which might not be seen in your lifetime. The first missionaries to Mashitolo stepped into the unknown. Wild animals and endemic malaria were only two potential hazards. Their courage left a legacy – and so did John the Baptist’s. What is your legacy to those who follow you?

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

A saint who waited

by Daniel Kearney

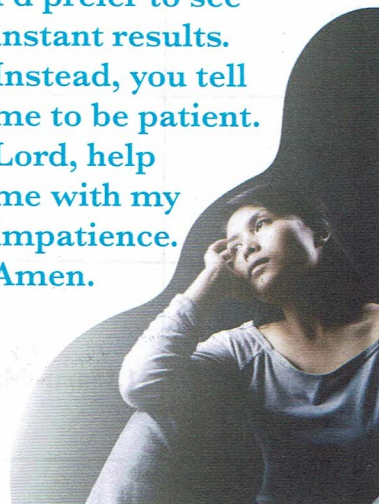
“Same day deliveries”, “click and collect”, “instant credit”: the siren slogans and distinguishing features of modern life, which many believe to be essential to their well-being and domestic happiness. We seldom, if ever, have to wait too long these days for whatever we want. Patience, once considered a virtue, something to pray for and to strive for is, in our increasingly secularised society, an unnecessary burden, a remnant of a bygone age.

But good things can also come to those who wait. Think of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and her years of longing for a child, enduring her barren humiliation with faith and patience, resisting the temptations to fill the void within her, as we often do, with distractions and false hopes. Suddenly, miraculously

she conceives, for nothing is impossible to God. Perhaps her example of waiting patiently for what we need might work for us too.

Daniel Kearney is a former headmaster and teacher of Religious Studies.

Living Lord, I am not very good at waiting for good things to happen. I’d prefer to see instant results. Instead, you tell me to be patient. Lord, help me with my impatience. Amen.



Patience is a virtue...?

by Katie Knight

Have you ever seen people who are hungry – really hungry? They sit in patient silence. They don’t care where they sit – or lie – provided they don’t have to use what little energy they have to complain, search for food or even to cry. If hungry people are also thirsty, the blinding headache of dehydration steadily increases until the slightest movement becomes unbearable. Babies and children eventually stop crying, silenced by hunger, thirst and helplessness.

Starving people wait because they have no alternative: sooner or later, there may be food and drink. Their patience is not a virtue: it is a desperate act of hope for an end to suffering.

We talk about “hungering” for the birth of Jesus, how truly hungry are we? Is ours the emptiness which is

easily satisfied by a tasty snack or a meal? Is ours the enforced helpless patience of the starving, whose waiting can mean the difference between life and death?

How urgently do we need Jesus?

Katie Knight is a freelance Catholic writer.

“**The Virgin Mary is the ‘Way’ that God prepared in order to come into the world. Let us entrust to her the salvation and peace awaited by all men and women of our time.**”

Pope Francis

Today:
Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11
2 Peter 3:8-14
Mark 1:1-8

Monday:
Isaiah 35:1-10
Luke 5:17-26

Tuesday:
Isaiah 40:1-11
Matthew 18:12-14

Wednesday:
Isaiah 40:25-31
Matthew 11:28-30

Thursday:
Isaiah 41:13-20
Matthew 11:11-15

Friday:
Isaiah 48:17-19
Matthew 11:16-19

Saturday:
Ecclesiasticus 48:1-4,
9-11
Matthew 17:10-13

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28