

SUNDAY PLUS

Setting priorities

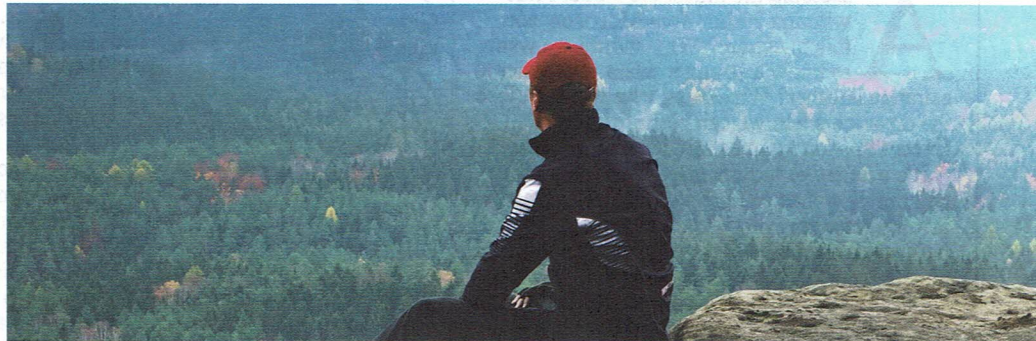
What's the solution?

by Jim Cargin

Who would ever have guessed? Religious fashion statements aren't such a novelty after all. Yesterday's wider phylacteries and longer tassels have morphed into today's _____ (please fill in the blank). This points to an unsettling truth: those of us partial to booing and hissing whenever those poor old Pharisees slither onto the Gospel stage may be being a tad too quick to demonise. Jesus' regular criticism of them for their concern about appearances and lightning-bolt condemnation of others can give the impression that they are firmly "them", not "us".

And yet... and yet... uncomfortable though the thought may be, perhaps the Pharisees are much more like us than we care to admit.

How so? Well, the Pharisees took their faith seriously, and believed sincerely that right was on



their side. Are we that different? So Jesus' warning is addressed as much to us today, as to them then: anyone who takes their faith at all seriously runs the risk of hypocrisy. No one has built-in immunity from spiritual pride. Jesus said it. St Paul said it. And in our own day, Pope Francis says it shockingly often.

But what's the solution? First, know the traps are there; second, consciously avoid admiration or

human praise; third, and most decisively: embrace servanthood. Isn't that going too far? No! However far down we go, we will always find one person has gone even lower: Jesus. In him the greatest among us has become our servant, our helper. Jesus, servant of humanity, help us today to struggle against spiritual pride!

Jim Cargin is a long-time worker with l'Arche.

To serve

by Dame Mary Richardson

This week's readings are a lesson in good leadership. Malachi roundly condemns those who, in a position of authority, betray those in their care by a lack of integrity and honesty. Such flawed leaders do more harm than good.

Matthew sets out the requirements for good leadership: humility and service. Vanity and self-importance are the enemies of good and successful leadership. Service is a noble vocation. One of the Pope's titles is "Servant of the Servants of God". The motto of the Prince of Wales is "I Serve". Paul stresses the need for total dedication and Luke elsewhere reminds us that to whom much is given, much is required.

A bishop carries his crook to find and rescue his lost sheep. He also walks at the back of the procession while the altar servers lead. Good leadership is shared. Neither the leader nor the led escapes responsibility nor can either do without the other.

Dame Mary Richardson is the President of SOS Children's Villages.

God, you are my God. I long for you. My soul thirsts for you. Be the beginning and end of all that I say, think and do. Amen.

Setting priorities

by Sr Thérèse Garman SMP

Jesus is critical of the Pharisees' motivations for their good works which are, not to help people, but to be seen and praised for their seemingly good actions. However, Jesus says, "The greatest among you must be your servant."

Don't we also appreciate attention, compliments and praise for the good we do? And we can accept these gracefully. Jesus wants us to do good, be helpful and caring, but with the proper motivation – love! How often do we do something simply because it's expected, our duty, job, responsibility? Jesus wants everything we do to be done in a loving and caring way: being attentive, helping a neighbour, striving

to be patient with our children when we're really tired. These acts, done with love and care, are a great gift to the receiver. Not only will we make the people with whom we interact feel noticed and cared about, but we ourselves will also experience being more loving, peaceful and cheerful.

Sr Thérèse Garman is a Sister of Our Lady of Providence.

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Do we turn to God only to ask him for things, to thank him, or do we also turn to him to worship him? What does it mean, then, to worship God? It means learning to be with him, it means that we stop trying to dialogue with him, and it means sensing that his presence is the most true, the most good, the most important thing of all.

Pope Francis

Today:
Malachi 1:14 – 2:2. 8-10
1 Thessalonians 2:7-9. 13
Matthew 23:1-12

Monday:
Romans 11:19-36
Luke 14:12-14

Tuesday:
Romans 12:5-16
Luke 14:15-24

Wednesday:
Romans 13:8-10
Luke 14:25-33

Thursday:
Ezekiel 47:1-2. 8-9. 12
1 Corinthians 3:9-11. 16-17
John 2:13-22

Friday:
Romans 15:14-21
Luke 16:1-8

Saturday:
Romans 16:3-9. 16. 22-27
Luke 16:9-15

Next Sunday:
Wisdom 6:12-16
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Matthew 25:1-13