

SUNDAY PLUS

Chosen and loved

Blockbuster mission

by Rev. Paul Broadbent

When you have gone to the cinema in expectation and anticipation of watching a long-awaited blockbuster, you will have experienced warnings about mobile phones, talking through the film, a sequence of trailers and adverts, the Pearl and Dean theme music, the dimming of the lights and then silence.

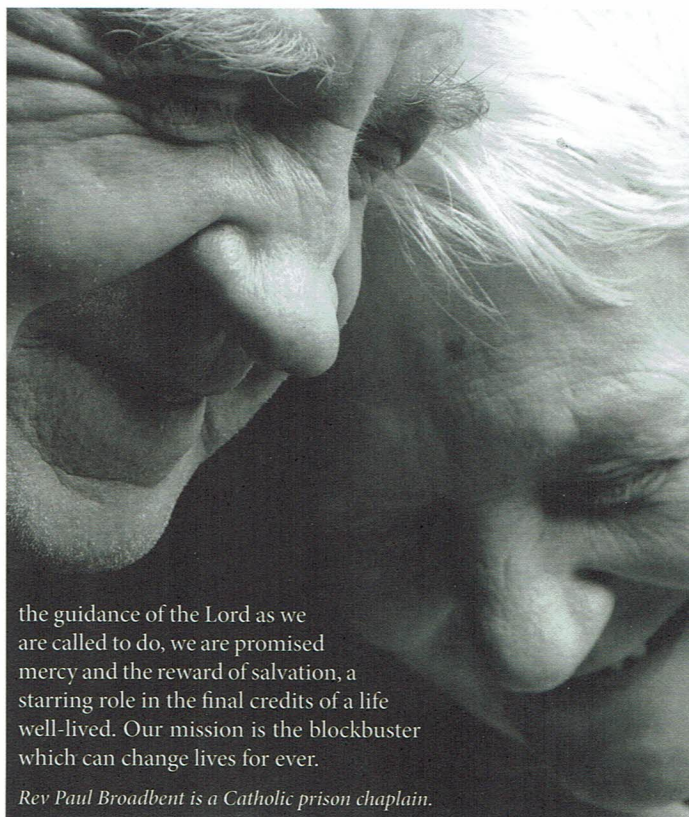
In the past, there would have been credits before the film started, but now the tendency is to burst into action, setting the scene, the tone and the backdrop.

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist calls us to live lives that bear fruit, decent lives that share resources, with

care and compassion for others. The prophets of the past advertised the coming of the "promised one". Isaiah reminds us to "prepare a way for the Lord" whose glory is to be revealed.

And then there is the moment of heightened anticipation before his public ministry begins. The "promised one" is amongst us. At Jesus' baptism, his glory is revealed by the Spirit and the voice that demands we sit up and listen.

There are no more trailers for us. We are now part of the main event. By the grace of God, we have been given a part to play. As St Paul reminds us, if we live "decent lives", constantly listening to



the guidance of the Lord as we are called to do, we are promised mercy and the reward of salvation, a starring role in the final credits of a life well-lived. Our mission is the blockbuster which can change lives for ever.

Rev Paul Broadbent is a Catholic prison chaplain.

Beloved child

by Claire Wright

Becoming a parent is not only a blessing in the obvious sense of welcoming a child. There is a genuine privilege to be found in getting a glimpse of God's love for us and his infinite patience and grace. The most unconditional, unbreakable love in the world is that of a parent for their child. We love our children not because they have earned it, but simply because they are ours. We protect them fiercely. We forgive them readily. We help them become more fully themselves.

God is the perfect parent. Where we fail our children daily, God is steadfast for ever. The words we see in the readings today remind us of the Lord's true nature as our heavenly parent: "love", "saved", "mercy", "comfort", "tenderly", "shepherd", "gathers", "carries",

"close", "gently". God is our loving parent and merciful saviour. We are the beloved.

"He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep." (Isaiah 40:11)

Claire Wright is a Brighton-based freelance writer who runs a faith blog and a healthy family food website, all while taking care of two lively toddlers.

“Let us allow ourselves to be humbly led by the Holy Spirit in order to avoid taking the wrong road and closing our hearts.

Pope Francis

Spirit-filled

by Sr Thérèse Garman SMP

With these words, the Father sends Jesus off on his ministry. With these same words he sends us out on our ministry: to bring good news to the poor, bind up hearts that are broken, set free the oppressed.

It's about being loved and loving unconditionally. As a member of the body of Christ, not only am I the beloved, but everyone else is too. Are we aware of seeing, hearing, speaking to each person as a beloved child of God and treating them with that same love?

It's about relationships – a deep connection with God as intimate members of God's family and with whom he is "well pleased". Let us allow the Spirit that empowered Jesus to do the same for us: "rekindle

in us the fire of God's love", so that we may enter ever more deeply into the most beautiful and enduring of all relationships, that of the Blessed Trinity. Then we will really be able to renew the face of the earth.

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

Loving Lord, it's not always comfortable to know that I am "called and chosen" by you. It means work and responsibilities which I would occasionally prefer to avoid. Help me to say "yes" to you and to go wherever you lead me. Amen.

Today:
Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11
Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7
Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

Monday:
Hebrews 1:1-6
Mark 1:14-20

Tuesday:
Hebrews 2:5-12
Mark 1:21-28

Wednesday:
Hebrews 2:14-18
Mark 1:29-39

Thursday:
Hebrews 3:7-14
Mark 1:40-45

Friday:
Hebrews 4:1-5, 11
Mark 2:1-12

Saturday:
Hebrews 4:12-16
Mark 2:13-17

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 62:1-5
1 Corinthians 12:4-11
John 2:1-11