

SUNDAY PLUS

Treasure in heaven

Broken but blessed



by Rev. Paul Broadbent

The young man stood before the Lord, a rich but broken man – and the Lord loved him. He asked what it would take of him to follow the Lord, to find peace. “Everything”, answered the Lord, “every thing of life, but no thing for eternity”. The young man was broken by things, things that are passing. And still, the Lord loved him.

Today is Prisoners’ Sunday. How many prisons hold the story of people, families, victims broken by money, drugs, moments of violence; broken by greed, addiction, anger; of people, families, victims broken by life, broken by what is passing? And in their brokenness, the Lord loves each of them.

How many of us have felt, or may feel, broken at some point in our life? Broken but blessed. Blessed because each of us always has been, and always will be, loved by the Lord of

all. Loved and offered peace from all that is passing, from all that is to pass, and will pass.

St Paul, himself no stranger to brokenness, writes in his letter to the Philippians: “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ.”

Whatever brokenness prevents us from finding, from trusting and

following the Lord and finding the peace that is within, the peace of the Spirit, we are each called to pray and pray with thanksgiving. We are, we always have been, and always will be loved by the Lord.

Pray also for those broken people, imprisoned by society, those imprisoned by life, by illness or separation. The Lord loves them and loves us all. The Lord calls each of them and us, to find God and find peace.

Rev. Paul Broadbent is a Catholic prison chaplain.

Treasure in prison

by James Gallogly

Sometimes we simply cannot see our greatest treasures even though they are staring us in the face! We are all guilty of this. Cheryl Crow, the American singer-songwriter puts it, “It’s not having what you want: it’s wanting what you’ve got.”

Too often we spend so much time chasing what we want that we can lose what we had in the first place. It is only then that we recognise, with regret perhaps, that we had what we wanted all along.

In prison, the love and support of family and friends can be a “priceless stone.” The reminder in difficult times that we are still loved, for who we are – despite our humanity and our failings – is a truly great treasure.

Behind a cell door great wisdom can be found. The recognition that we still belong, to our family and friends, is powerfully restorative. It gives great hope.

James Gallogly is a Catholic prison chaplain.

Lord, give your courage and support to all those who are in prison. Be with them, their families and all who love them. Fill them with hope for a future of peace and happiness. Amen.

“The Lord does not remain outside, he does not remain outside their cells, he does not remain outside the prison; rather, he is inside, he is there. You can say this: the Lord is inside with them... No cell is so isolated that it is shut to the Lord, none. He is there; he weeps with them; he works with them; he hopes with them; his paternal and maternal love reaches everywhere. I pray that each one may open his heart to this love.

Pope Francis

Hearts of gold

by Gerlinde Symons

It seems to me that prisoners have a head start when it comes to journeying towards heaven. They have already left their homes and families behind, and have to manage with very few possessions in their cells. They’re already in the process of letting go of the many things that can get in the way of deepening one’s relationship with God.

In the chapel, at one of the prisons where I work, we have a weekly prayer group that has been running for many years. It’s the

only time when the men can be real with each other: the masks fall away, it’s a safe place to share how they’re really feeling and what’s worrying them, and to ask God to take care of it all. This deep sharing connects the men to each other and to God – they support and encourage each other and gradually learn to trust more in God’s goodness, mercy and love.

And I realise that what I’m witnessing is God’s kingdom being built here on earth, in a prison – amazing!

Gerlinde Symons is a lay Catholic chaplain in two UK prisons.

Today: Wisdom 7:7-11 Hebrews 4:12-13 Mark 10:17-30	Monday: Galatians 4:22-24. 26-27. 31 – 5:1 Luke 11:29-32	Tuesday: Galatians 5:1-6 Luke 11:37-41	Wednesday: Galatians 5:18-25 Luke 11:42-46	Thursday: 2 Timothy 4:10-17 Luke 10:1-9	Friday: Ephesians 1:11-14 Luke 12:1-7	Saturday: Ephesians 1:15-23 Luke 12:8-12	Next Sunday: Isaiah 53:10-11 Hebrews 4:14-16 Mark 10:35-45
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