

SUNDAY PLUS

Compassion

God's love saves

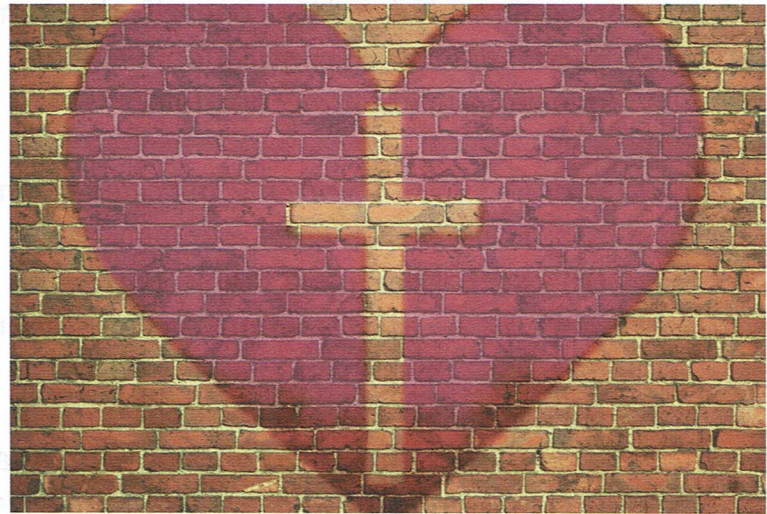
by Paul Higginson

If you read a newspaper, watch TV or look at social media you will see people judging each other – their appearance, habits, social or ethnic background, or culture. How quick we are to judge others, and often to condemn. Yet Pope Francis, when confronted with complex issues, simply asked, “who am I to judge?” This is an echo of the Gospel message we hear today when John tells us that God sent his son Jesus, not to judge the world, but to save the world.

This does not mean, of course, that we can spend our lives doing whatever we want. We know that sin – selfishness,

greed, materialism, etc. makes us miserable, hurts others and damages our relationship with God. Jesus is clear that we must reject the darkness of sin, but the overwhelming message of the Gospel is compassion. There is nothing that cannot be forgiven, whatever we have done or whatever our current situation. God loves us and has sent his Son to save us. That's the whole of the Gospel in a nutshell! It is both an extraordinary promise and a call to action. We must stop judging and condemning others, and sometimes we need to stop condemning ourselves.

God offers love to the whole world. When we see ourselves as God sees us, then we can accept John's invitation to “come into



the light” in this life, and share in his promise of eternal life in the next.

Paul Higginson is the Assistant Principal at the Catholic Sixth Form College in Harrow and has been a parish catechist for thirty years.

God's work of art

by Mgr Roger Reader

I love to share the works of the artist Caravaggio with the young prisoners I work with. Caravaggio caused great scandal among many of the scholars of his day because he painted the world as he saw it, in all its filth and glory. He used ordinary people as models and dared to paint even dirty feet.

Paul today speaks of God as an artist – we are God's work of art. That is sometimes hard to believe when we look around the world with all its ugliness. We know all too well that none of us is perfect – certainly not those who end up in prison. But we must not despair because we are not perfect. We are God's work of art. God has created us, and indeed loves us so much

that he sent us his son as a sign of that love.

Mgr Roger Reader is the vice-rector of the Royal College of St Alban, Valladolid, Spain.

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Am I a parked Christian — lazy — or a courageous Christian? Am I a Christian who wants all the guarantees or am I a Christian who takes risks? Am I a closed Christian or a Christian of horizons, of hope?

Pope Francis

Act justly, love tenderly

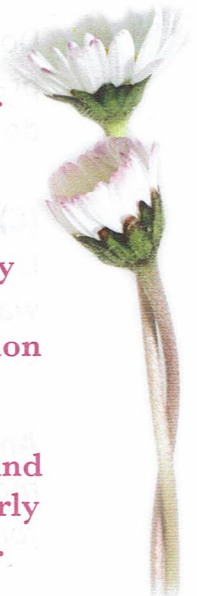
by Liam Sheridan

“Everyone needs compassion, the kindness of a Saviour,” runs one contemporary hymn. Perhaps you have sung those words yourself. But do we really believe them to be true? Sometimes it can seem that other people have it all sorted out – that those of us who profess to follow Jesus have nothing to offer. The truth is that confidence breeds compassion. Isaiah's words invite us to shine, reminding us that a darkness lies over this world. In a time of terrorism, fragile economies and other threats, we must remind ourselves that we are living in a golden age – the age of Christ, when we have a mystery revealed to us which was not made fully known even to Isaiah and his contemporaries. May we take time

to dwell in God's presence, reflect on his word – and grow in a confidence that breeds compassion for the world around us.

Liam Sheridan is a lawyer and father of three.

Rein me in, Lord, whenever I forget to act with sensitivity and compassion towards someone whom I find particularly irritating. Amen.



Today: 2 Chronicles 36:14-16. 19-23
Ephesians 2:4-10
John 3:14-21

Monday: Isaiah 65:17-21
John 4:43-54

Tuesday: Ezekiel 47:1-9. 12
John 5:1-3. 5-16

Wednesday: Isaiah 49:8-15
John 5:17-30

Thursday: Exodus 32:7-14
John 5:31-47

Friday: Wisdom 2:1. 12-22
John 7:1-2. 10. 25-30

Saturday: Jeremiah 11:18-20
John 7:40-52

Saturday: St Patrick (Feast):
1 Peter 4:7-11
Luke 5:1-11

Next Sunday: Jeremiah 31:31-34
Hebrews 5:7-9
John 12:20-33