

SUNDAY PLUS

Share what you have

No “optional extras”

by Luke de Pulford

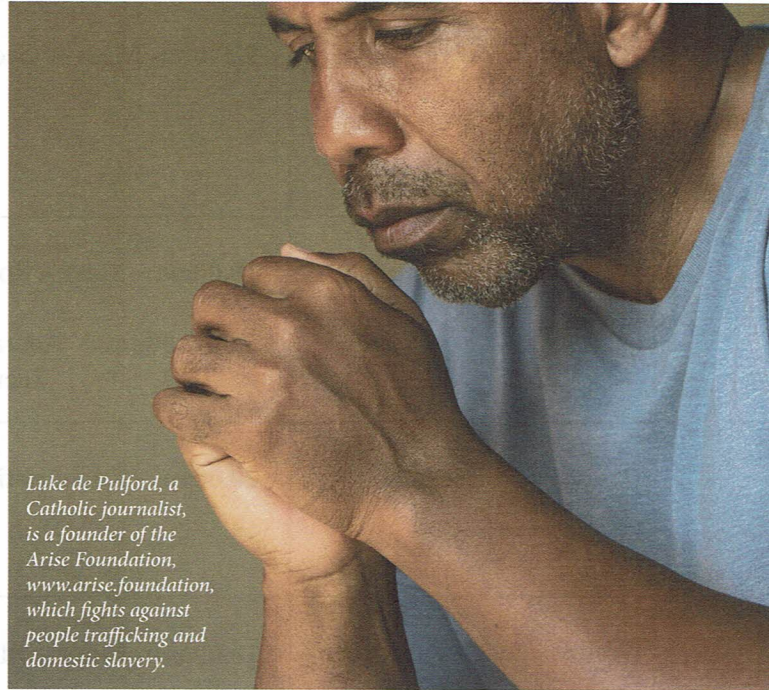
If, like me, you value personal comfort, today’s Gospel is a tough one. I’ll listen, sure, but I don’t really hear it. This might be because hearing it might mean a radical reorientation of my priorities. The modern world doesn’t seem to allow much space for that. For many, the fight to keep our own heads above water is enough of a battle. Especially if you’re like me, and you have a whole list of excuses (many of them legitimate).

But charity and almsgiving are not optional extras. They are vital to Christian flourishing. In many ways, today’s exhortation is one of the easiest. We are not being told to give our coat and shirt to someone who would sue us (Matthew 5:39), but just to give away what we have

spare to those who are suffering. Its reasonableness strips us of the luxury of evasion.

It is all too easy to rationalise away our Gospel obligations, especially where two or more are in tension with one another. To illustrate the point crudely: someone supporting a family cannot simply give away what they own to the poor. But that is not the teaching of this Gospel. How often do we ask ourselves how much we really need? What do we have to spare? Is our contribution to the poor merely our loose change or is it something that constitutes a core part of our Christian life?

To help us prepare for the coming of Christ, the Church offers readings to focus our minds on where we really stand in relation to these teachings. Only we know the truth – in the silence of our consciences, in conversation with the Lord.



Luke de Pulford, a Catholic journalist, is a founder of the Arise Foundation, www.arise.foundation, which fights against people trafficking and domestic slavery.

Give until it hurts

by Sr Janet Fearn
FMDM

When did you last give until it hurt? When did someone’s incredible generosity transform your life?

The prison governor entered the newly-refurbished gym and called out one of the men. Informing him that his father had just died, the governor apologised. Staff shortages meant that nobody was available to escort the prisoner home to see his family.

The other inmates stepped forward. They had been longing for the work on the gym to be completed and this was their first opportunity to use it. “We’ve decided that if we return to our cells, then an officer would be free to act as escort.”

The outside world has little opportunity to witness the amazing generosity and sensitivity that happens behind bars. The bereaved man and family will never forget that apparently simple act of goodness.

A gift given from someone’s plenty has little meaning. When it comes as a result of genuine self-sacrifice, it is more precious than gold.

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

“Everyone has something to give to society; no one is excluded from contributing to the good of all.”

Pope Francis

Just enough

by Jo Siedlecka

There is so much injustice and suffering in the world that it is easy to become despondent and ask, “What can I do that will make a difference?” – and then simply give up and do nothing. Most people aren’t called to be martyrs – like Maximilian Kolbe or Dorothy Stang. But in the Gospel reading at this midpoint in Advent, John isn’t asking for heroics. He doesn’t advise the tax collectors to stop collecting, or tell soldiers to desert. His message is simply one of social justice. Share what you have, be honest, do not oppress people. Live your daily life well. How can I bring the divine into my ordinary actions and make my faith a living thing? What does my

lifestyle say about my faith in Christ? Do I hoard or share what I have with others, especially those who are poor, sick or lonely?

Jo Siedlecka runs the Independent Catholic News website: www.indcatholicnews.com

Loving Lord, it is not always easy to share what I have with others. Sometimes the hardest thing to share is my carefully-hoarded spare time. Teach me to be generous with my time and to make myself available, even when it’s inconvenient. Amen.

Today:
Zephaniah 3:14-18
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:10-18

Monday:
Genesis 49:2, 8-10
Matthew 1:1-17

Tuesday:
Jeremiah 23:5-8
Matthew 1:18-24

Wednesday:
Judges 13:2-7, 24-25
Luke 1:5-25

Thursday:
Isaiah 7:10-14
Luke 1:26-38

Friday:
Song of Songs 2:8-14
Luke 1:39-45

Saturday:
1 Samuel 1:24-28
Luke 1:46-56

Next Sunday:
Micah 5:1-4
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45