

SUNDAY PLUS

Little and important

The gift of children

by Dom Dominic Mansi OSB

Ronald Rolheiser tells the following story of when he heard a priest give a homily at his father's funeral.

The priest said that his father was a born leader, commanded respect, was sometimes feared for his strength. He went on to say that the last ten years of his father's life were very important as in those years he suffered the loss of his wife, had a stroke and had to go into a care home: he never got over these losses.

For the first time since he couldn't tie his shoe laces as a child, he said "Help me". He was now ready to meet St Peter at the gates of heaven and say "Help me" rather than tell St Peter how he might better organise things.

For the first time since childhood the priest's father was vulnerable. This is what Jesus admired in children, not so much their innocence but their vulnerability; they have no illusion about their self-sufficiency. They are dependent upon those around them for help.

A frightened child is dependent on a parent to comfort them until their fears go away. Adults need, from time to time, to share their troubled thoughts with wife or husband, partner or friend. Dependency is not a weakness, Jesus wants us to turn to his father and cry out for help: that is what children do and we must not be afraid to do the same and cry for help.

Children also give us the gift of humour as does this child's letter to God: "How did you know you were God?..." Charlie.

Dom Dominic Mansi is a monk of Downside Abbey.



No "soft option"

by Sr Janet Fearn
FMDM

When Oscar Romero became Archbishop of San Salvador in 1977, he was considered the soft option. His beloved books and academia would keep him quiet and would not threaten the Church held captive by El Salvador's brutal military dictatorship.

The day before his death on 24 March 1980, Romero pleaded to the government, "In the name of God, in the name of this suffering people whose cries rise to heaven more loudly each day, I implore you, I beg you, I order you in the name of God: stop the repression." Thirty-five years later, Pope Francis wrote, "In times of difficult coexistence, Archbishop Romero knew how to lead, defend and protect his flock, remaining faithful to the Gospel and in

communion with the whole Church. His ministry was distinguished by particular attention to the most poor and marginalized."

Romero became a leader who truly laid down his life for others. The "soft option" became one of our greatest modern martyrs.

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

Lord, be with the bishops as they think about the needs, hopes and dreams of young people across the world. May the synod give hope and encouragement to all young people, whoever and wherever they are. Amen.

Little children

by Cowan Watson

The crying baby; the crawler under the pew; the screaming "cherub" being forcibly dragged to the toilets... Not really my idea of the kingdom of heaven! Perhaps I might be forgiven for occasionally sympathising with the disciples whom Jesus admonished when they tried to prevent people bringing their little children to him for a blessing. But of course, Jesus wasn't really saying that we needed to revert to such child-like behaviour ourselves in order to enter the kingdom. Rather, in the same way that a child implicitly trusts their parents, we have to develop a faith which allows us to put aside our worldly wisdom and our striving to be self-sufficient. A forgiving faith, which transcends bitter memories and resentments, hurts and heartache and is open and

receptive to the love of the Father. That way lies both joy and peace – and no tantrums!

Cowan Watson is the Editor of The Light of the North, the magazine of the Aberdeen archdiocese.

“**Today it will do us good to consider what my attitude is with children, with teenagers, with young people... What is my attitude like? Is it the attitude of a brother, father, mother or sister who helps him/her grow, or is it an attitude of detachment?”**

Pope Francis

Today:
Genesis 2:18-24
Hebrews 2:9-11
Mark 10:2-16

Monday:
Galatians 1:6-12
Luke 10:25-37

Tuesday:
Galatians 1:13-24
Luke 10:38-42

Wednesday:
Galatians 2:1-2, 7-14
Luke 11:1-4

Thursday:
Galatians 3:1-5
Luke 11:5-13

Friday:
Galatians 3:7-14
Luke 11:15-26

Saturday:
Galatians 3:22-29
Luke 11:27-28

Next Sunday:
Wisdom 7:7-11
Hebrews 4:12-13
Mark 10:17-30