

SUNDAY PLUS

Watch and pray

Watch yourselves

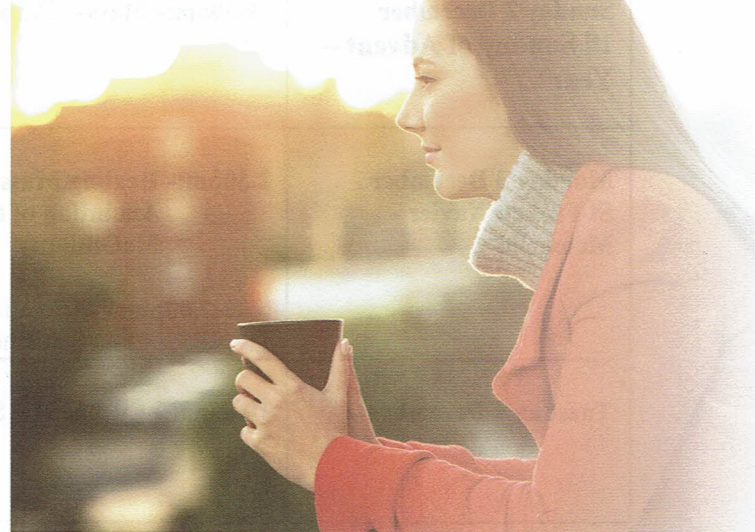
by Fr Denis McBride
C.Ss.R.

The Advent readings call on us to watch ourselves, to stay alert, to be ready. To be ready for what? At this time of the year people are trying to get ready for Christmas, for winter, for cars that won't start and for heating bills that won't stop. Some people are preparing for exams; some are preparing for death and some are preparing for new life in their families. Life goes on in the midst of all this coming and going.

In the Gospel Jesus talks about the future coming of the Son of Man to encourage people to take responsibility for the present time.

The only way to be ready for an unpredictable event is to make the present a time of fidelity. Then there is nothing to fear. In the Gospel Jesus gives his advice before his passion: it's as if he is aware that he doesn't have all the time in the world. He must be ready for the time of pain ahead and he uses the present to prepare himself.

The only way to secure the future is to care about the present. We are all responsible for the world we live in; we are not passive victims of the inevitable. If we do nothing, we can hardly accuse the world of conspiring against us. Peace never comes because people are not bothered. There's nothing automatic about peace – it needs peacemakers. Because we care for the world the Lord has given us, we stay awake to



what is happening in it, good and evil. Otherwise the last time becomes the present tense.

Fr Denis McBride's many CDs, DVDs and books are available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk

Keep them in prayer

by Christine Clark

When things are tough we search for practical solutions, sometimes only turning to prayer as a last resort when we feel there's nothing else we can do. We can feel especially powerless when we are far away from those needing help. Yet prayer should be our first response, not the last.

Prayer – our communication with God – is the bedrock from which our relationship with him grows. Rather than make a one-sided intercession, a shopping-list of requests, we can have a two-way conversation, listening to God. You can say things to him you can't say to other people – after all, we have no secrets from him: God knows everything about us and sees all. Our time with him calms us and smooths

out our worries. And if we can't find the words, just a simple "Lord, have mercy" is all that's needed.

When you don't know how to help someone or can't resolve your own problems – or you just can't cope any more – you can give it to God. For humanity, known to us or unknown, our prayer is a practical and physical, as well as spiritual, demonstration of our love for them. What better gift?

Christine Clark is a retired member of the Redemptorist Publications Editorial staff.

Loving Lord, as I start my Advent journey, let me take one tiny step closer to you each day so that, in the busy times that lie ahead, I will not lose sight of you. Amen.

Open your heart

By Dr Liam Waldron

Waiting for the birth of a new baby is usually a time filled with excitement, mixed with some anxiety. The expectant mother, her family and friends all look forward to the birth and hope that everything will go smoothly and safely. Sometimes not everything goes according to plan. For Mary, the mother of Jesus, a stable was the only shelter available for the birth, having had all other doors closed to her. Indeed in many places in our world today, babies are born to families who live in the midst of unimaginable strife because our doors and hearts are closed to their plight.

During Advent, as we look forward to the birth of Jesus, we are called to open our hearts to the parents and families of children born with illness

or disability. People with disabilities have much to teach us about God. We are invited to develop loving friendships with each other so that we may abound in love for one another, just as our Father in heaven intended.

Dr Liam Waldron is the co-author of Intellectual Disability: caring for yourself and others, available from Redemptorist Publications: www.rpbooks.co.uk

“ Goodness, together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all: they have to be realised each day.

Pope Francis

Today:

Jeremiah 33:14-16
1 Thessalonians 3:12 – 4:2
Luke 21:25-28. 34-36

Monday:

Isaiah 2:1-5
Matthew 8:5-11

Tuesday:

Isaiah 11:1-10
Luke 10:21-24

Wednesday:

Isaiah 25:6-10
Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday:

Isaiah 26:1-6
Matthew 7:21. 24-27

Friday:

Isaiah 29:17-24
Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday:

Genesis 3:9-15. 20
Ephesians 1:3-6. 11-12
Luke 1:26-38

Next Sunday:

Baruch 5:1-9
Philippians 1:4-6. 8-11
Luke 3:1-6