

SUNDAY PLUS



God is with us

All of us at Redemptorist Publications wish you and those you love a happy, blessed Christmas.



The light of the world is close

by Lucy Russell

At the beginning of January, earth will be at its closest point to the sun for the entire year. But in the UK, it will be dark and cold. How can we be so close to the sun and not feel its light and warmth? God is with us, and closest in the times of greatest darkness. But it can be hard to believe. This was a conversation I shared with the wife of a friend who isn't coming to Mass at the moment. He had a cancer scare last

summer and lost his sister and his Dad to different cancers in quick succession ten years ago. His wife doesn't believe in God at all, "he's finally come around to my way of thinking," she said. "He says, 'I'm a good person, why has this happened to me? How can this be part of God's plan, to make me suffer?'" It's not an easy question to answer.

Joseph must have wondered about God's plan for his life. He had decided to divorce Mary quietly, before an angel came to him in a dream and reassured

him that he shouldn't be afraid or feel as if he was alone. In accepting Jesus as his son, Joseph receives a daily reminder that he is far from alone, remembering "God with us" every time he whispers Jesus' name.

Christmas invites us to trust in a relationship with God and promises us that in those dark moments in life, the light of the world is closer than we can possibly imagine.

Dr Lucy Russell's book, *Who do you say you are?* Is available from Redemptorist Publications: www.rpbooks.co.uk

Unexpected greatness

by Sue McDermott OBE

As a mum and nan, I struggle with today's readings; I find the Gospel hugely challenging! It must take great faith to find that the woman you intend to marry is already pregnant and you know it's not your child. Wow!

Maybe Joseph was the first person to call God "a God of surprises"!

We acknowledge the greatness of Mary but surely, we must acknowledge the unexpected greatness of Joseph too. We speak of Mary as saying "Yes" but Joseph also said "Yes".

"When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, he took her as his wife".

What a great man of love and trust! The depth of humanity shown by both Mary and Joseph, will allow us to celebrate Christmas when God chose to become human in the person of Jesus Christ.

Our response to God calls us to unexpected greatness in the ordinariness of our lives.

Sue McDermott OBE is the Non-Executive Director of Rainbows Bereavement Support GB, is also the author of *Children and Loss: caring for yourself and others*, available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk

"As we admire our Mother for [her] response to God's call to mission, we ask her to help each of us to welcome God's plan into our lives with sincere humility and brave generosity."

Pope Francis

I had a dream...

by Sr Thérèse Garman SMP

How often in scripture does the still small voice of the Spirit come from within in a dream? God intervenes in a dream and causes Joseph to alter his decision. He agreed to let his plans be changed. How open and ready are we to discern and listen to the voice of the Spirit from within? In scripture, the dream is the arena where God and ourselves meet, a place where past, present and future intermingle and hope is engendered.

The promised Child is the embodiment of God's love. The womb and our inner sanctuary are places of beauty and holiness where God's love dwells and grows, so that we too may give birth to Emmanuel in our time.

God's promise was fulfilled for us because Joseph listened and entrusted himself to this inner world, where angels appear with a message from God who is with us in people and in dreams.

Sr Thérèse Garman is a Sister of Our Lady of Providence.

Lord of life, Mary and Joseph searched for a shelter where Jesus could be born. The stable, which was second-best in the eyes of the world, was perfect as far as you were concerned. Sometimes, Lord, my life is not all it should be, but let me welcome you into my heart this Christmas ☪ Amen.

Today: Isaiah 7:10-14
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-24

Monday: Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24
Luke 1:57-66

Tuesday: Mass in the Morning
Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16
Luke 1:67-79

Wednesday: Vigil Mass
Isaiah 62:1-5
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25
Matthew 1:1-25

Mass During the Night
Isaiah 9:1-7
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14

Mass at Dawn
Isaiah 62:11-12
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:15-20

Mass During the Day
Isaiah 52:7-10
Hebrews 1:1-6
John 1:1-18

Thursday: Acts 6:8-10;
7:54-8:1
Matthew 10:17-22

Friday: 1 John 1:1-4
John 20:2-8

Saturday: 1 John 1:5-2:2
Matthew 2:13-18

Next Sunday: Ecclesiasticus 3:2-6, 12-14
Colossians 3:12-21
Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23