

SUNDAY PLUS

To live is to learn

What makes the difference?

by Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

"Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen [pounds] nineteen [shillings] and six [pence], result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery."

Mr Wilkins Micawber was full of homespun wisdom. This cheerfully optimistic Charles Dickens character in *David Copperfield* survived because of his conviction that "something would turn up". Even when, to all external appearances, the world was collapsing around his shoulders, he exclaimed, "Welcome poverty! Welcome misery, welcome houselessness, welcome hunger, rags,

tempest, and beggary! Mutual confidence will sustain us to the end!"

We're not all gifted with Mr Micawber's optimism. Sometimes wisdom comes only in hindsight. Having built our towers without counting their cost, we suffer the consequences which we might have foreseen and avoided.

There are also the joy-filled surprises. Many of us, at school, laboured at a subject which did nothing to further career prospects but which, unexpectedly, provided an incalculably enriching, lifelong interest and hobby.

The tower builder of whom Jesus spoke, in calculating his expense sheet, avoided problems and, hopefully, poverty. But what happens when difficulties can't be foreseen, perhaps when the hot water boiler bursts,



flooding the house and wrecking floors, ceilings and furnishings? What makes the difference between despair and being able to cope with the unexpected circumstances? Could my inner resources have something to do with my "disaster response"?

Jesus wants me to examine my personal foundations. If they are strong, then I can carry the cost of discipleship. If they are weak or non-existent, then I'll be blown over by the first strong wind. Can I echo Mr Micawber's approach to his misfortune? Can I see difficulties, but also recognise a faith-filled way ahead?

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

Image/ Mr and Mrs Micawber and the Twins From *David Copperfield* by Fred Barnard. wikicommons med

Not to be wasted

by William Neal

Schoolteachers have warned students across the years: "Pay attention, one day you'll look back on these days and wish you hadn't wasted them." I'm sure many of us wish that we'd taken heed of their warnings; we regret that we had taken our education for granted.

Everywhere Jesus goes he teaches the crowds that gather around him. But his are not lessons in equations and formulas; instead, they are lessons of compassion, empathy and love. Today we hear Jesus teach that those who wish to be his disciples must give up everything to follow him. This is not always an easy lesson for us to hear. Our lives can become cluttered and stressful and we can be drawn away from God. Let us take the opportunity to free ourselves

from these distractions and follow Jesus' lessons of love, compassion and empathy; otherwise one day we'll look back and wish we hadn't wasted it.

William Neal is the Communications Assistant for the Jesuit Refugee Service UK: www.jrsuk.net

"Christian hope is the expectation of something that has already been fulfilled; the door is there, and I hope to reach the door. What do I have to do? Walk towards the door! I am certain that I will reach the door. This is how Christian hope is: having the certainty that I am walking towards something that is, not something that I hope may be."

Pope Francis

In more ways than one

by Sian Owen-Owen

"There's the 'Irish way' and the 'English way' of making a cup of tea." Curious, I asked for enlightenment. "The 'Irish way' is to add milk to the tea. The 'English way' means adding tea to the milk." There are arguments for and against both methods, probably having similar results.

How do you eat your hard-boiled egg? Do you slice off the top and then dig in with your spoon or do you crack the shell on a hard surface and peel off the "bits" before diving in? (What happens if the egg is unexpectedly runny?)

Most issues in life have several potential solutions. Alternatives can be enriching, life-giving and


filled with adventure: a baby learns to stand and discovers a whole new world. Avoiding change can mean missing out on exciting possibilities and becoming stuck in a soul-destroying rut.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

Courage to change the things I can,

And the wisdom to know the difference.

Sian Owen-Owen is a freelance Catholic writer.

Lord, help me to live so that I might learn to recognise you everywhere and to follow you regardless of what it might cost  Amen.

Today:
Wisdom 9:13-18
Philemon 9-10, 12-17
Luke 14:25-33

Monday:
Colossians 1:24 - 2:3
Luke 6:6-11

Tuesday:
Colossians 2:6-15
Luke 6:12-19

Wednesday:
Colossians 3:1-11
Luke 6:20-26

Thursday:
Colossians 3:12-17
Luke 6:27-38

Friday:
1 Timothy 1:1-2, 12-14
Luke 6:39-42

Saturday:
Numbers 21:4-9
Philippians 2:6-11
John 3:13-17

Next Sunday:
Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14
1 Timothy 1:12-17
Luke 15:1-32

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