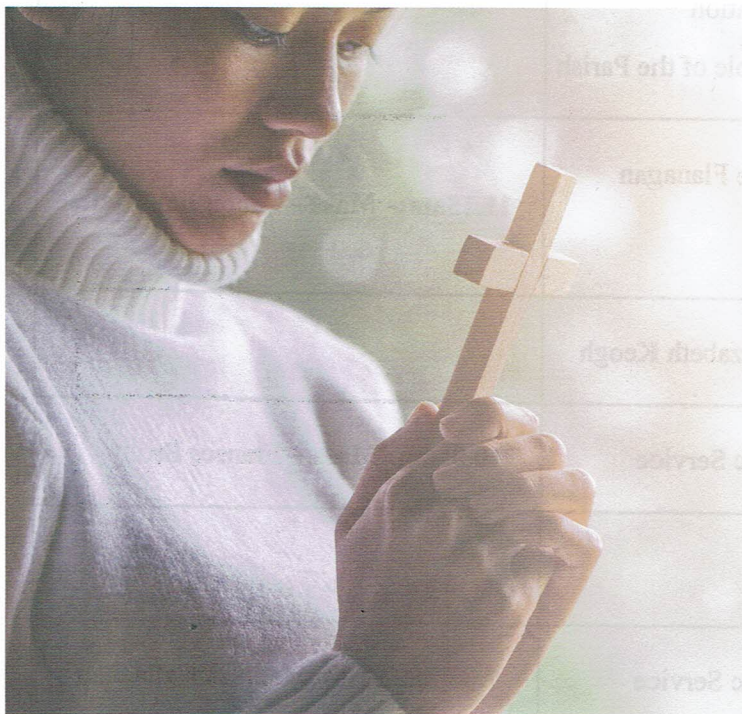


SUNDAY PLUS

Think outside the box

A Year of the Word

First, listen to God



by Michael George

Over the past few years children have become far more fluent in the language of learning. Children understand that they learn best when they are engaged in their learning, find it a little bit challenging, and have to demonstrate attitudes such as resilience and perseverance.

Embarking on the season of Lent we are encouraged to think about sacrifice. When we think about sacrifice we ought to have the same mind-set as children with their learning. Sacrifice should be something we have to think about, not something that just happens. We should challenge ourselves. We should develop strategies to cope with difficulties that may occur.

In today's Gospel, Jesus responds to being challenged by quoting

scripture to argue that it is the word of God that provides him with strength and nourishment. With God to provide, nothing else is needed. Scripture enables Jesus to stand up to and see off temptation. What God provides supersedes and outweighs anything that does not come directly from God.

If we challenge ourselves this Lent we should not expect to be able to meet those challenges on our own. We will need God's help. We will need to put our trust in God. We will need to listen to God. There would be nothing better to do this Lent than to make time for the word of God in our daily lives so that, like Jesus, we can allow scripture to empower us to be resilient and to persevere when temptation inevitably arises.

Michael George has served Catholic primary schools as a teacher and headteacher for more than twenty years.

Food for the soul

by Claire Wright

When things get tough, it's easy to reach for food. As a food writer, I know the temptations of believing that chocolate can solve every problem. As a food campaigner for family health, however, I know what can result from turning to food repeatedly, even delicious, joy-inducing foods, for comfort.

Since creation, God has blessed us with the gift of food. He "caused to grow every kind of tree, enticing to look at and good to eat", but in today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that food alone is not enough to sustain us: "[Human beings do] not live on bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Jesus went without food for forty

days and nights. The truth is, as wonderful and God-given a gift as food may be, it is not enough. Nothing is, except for God. He alone is enough for our bodies, spirits and souls. How perfect, then, that he should come to us in food – in bread and wine – to feed us with grace itself.

Claire Wright is a Brighton-based freelance writer who runs a faith blog and a healthy family food website, all while taking care of two lively toddlers.

Loving Lord, we're repeatedly advised to "think outside the box" – but what if I can't see a box which helps me to think inside or outside it? Help me, Lord, to make sense of life's muddles. **✠ Amen.**

Stones into bread

by Max Mathews

The message here is simple: human beings cannot live on bread alone, but on every word from God, meaning that we all need spiritual as well as physical nourishment. We feed our souls with the word of God, just like we feed our bodies with bread.

But we can think outside the box and get a second meaning. Jesus isn't just telling us to go to Mass or read the Bible, although these are important. He's saying we need to rely on him in times of trouble.

It's tempting to overcome difficulties in our life by satisfying material needs, or turning "stones" – rocky patches in our life – into

"bread" – cars, clothes, whatever it may be. Do we need these? Or is firm faith enough to make a real difference in our own lives?

Jesus makes this clear in John 6:35 "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry."

Max Mathews is a young Catholic student of journalism.

"Lent is a time of repentance, yes, but it is not a time of sorrow!... It is a joyous and serious commitment to strip ourselves of our selfishness... and to renew ourselves according to the grace of our baptism."

Pope Francis

Today:
Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7
Romans 5:12-19
Matthew 4:1-11

Monday:
Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18
Matthew 25:31-46

Monday (W):
St David (Solemnity):
Philippians 3:8-14;
Matthew 5:13-16

Tuesday:
Isaiah 55:10-11
Matthew 6:7-15

Wednesday:
Jonah 3:1-10
Luke 11:29-32

Thursday:
Esther 14:3-5, 12-14
Matthew 7:7-12

Friday:
Ezekiel 18:21-28
Matthew 5:20-26

Saturday:
Deuteronomy
26:16-19
Matthew 5:43-48

Next Sunday:
Genesis 12:1-4
2 Timothy 1:8-10
Matthew 17:1-9