

# SUNDAY PLUS



Pray with mercy

A Year of the Word

by Fr Denis McBride  
C.Ss.R.

## Getting stung doing good

The story is told of a holy old man who used to meditate every morning under a large tree on the banks of the river Ganges in northern India. The place he chose was near a site of pilgrimage where Hindus came to wash in the sacred river and cleanse themselves from sin. One morning, after he had finished his meditation, the old man noticed a large scorpion floating helplessly on the strong current of the river. The scorpion became caught in the tree's long roots that extended into the river bed. The more it struggled to free itself, the more entangled it became in the roots. The old man reached out to free the captive animal and, as soon as he touched it, the scorpion lifted its tail and stung him wildly. But the old man reached out again to free it.

A young man was passing and saw what was happening. He

shouted out: "Old man, what's wrong with you? You must be mad! Why bother risking your life to save such an ugly, useless creature?" The old man turned to the onlooker, and in his pain there was a question: "Friend," he said, "because it is the nature of the scorpion to sting, why should I give up my own nature to save?"

The story of the old man and the scorpion raises a problem that we all face: do we take our cue for action from the treatment we receive from others, or do we continue in the way of graciousness even when we get stung ourselves? Listen to today's Gospel.



Fr Denis McBride's many CDs, DVDs and books are available from Redemptorist Publications, [www.rpbooks.co.uk](http://www.rpbooks.co.uk)

## Start a different encounter

by Catherine Pepinster

A mother's love for her child; a husband and wife for each other; the fondness that friends feel for those they have known for years: these are emotions we all experience and find easy to understand. But to cherish those who do us wrong? This is some of Jesus' hardest teaching to follow, and evidence of how he would turn the world upside down. He rejects the ancient culture of revenge, of an eye for an eye, and urges instead a different way of thinking. The teaching here in Matthew's Gospel has become very familiar, giving rise to the saying of turning the other cheek. Familiarity means it has lost some of its power. Hearing

it once more is a reminder of how radical it is and how provocative. How will an enemy react to this unexpected response? Jesus' teaching leads to a different kind of response and the start of a different encounter.

Catherine Pepinster is a former editor of *The Tablet* and the author of *The Keys and the Kingdom - the British and the papacy from John Paul II to Francis*, published by T&T Clark.

Lord, when I feel bogged down by all I have to do, let me think of those whose lives are harder than mine. Watch over, protect and bless them. Let them find the support and the solutions that they need. Amen.

## Love your enemies

by Des Kelly

"Love your enemies." This is one of the most revolutionary things ever said. Other revolutionaries said the enemy must be destroyed.

"Love your enemies"? Most of us sometimes find it hard enough to love our friends. So, it is even harder to love our enemies. All of us have some enemies, or at least some people we dislike. Why is it that we dislike these particular people? It may be because of something they said or did to us. But there is a deeper reason: it is because they bring out the worst in us.

The same Jesus who taught us to love our enemies empowers us to do so. All we need to do is to ask for that power.

When was the last time I prayed for a person who hurt me? Pick out such a person now and pray for him or her.

Des Kelly, a retired headteacher, now works to develop leadership in Catholic schools and parishes.

"Let us pause here for a moment and pray in silence for all these families in difficulty, whether due to problems of illness, unemployment, discrimination, need to emigrate, due to difficulty in understanding each other and also to disunion."

Pope Francis

Today:  
Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18  
1 Corinthians 3:16-23  
Matthew 5:38-48

Monday:  
James 3:13-18  
Mark 9:14-29

Tuesday:  
James 4:1-10  
Mark 9:30-37

Wednesday:  
Joel 2:12-18  
2 Corinthians 5:20 - 6:2  
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday:  
Deuteronomy 30:15-20  
Luke 9:22-25

Friday:  
Isaiah 58:1-9  
Matthew 9:14-15

Saturday:  
Isaiah 58:9-14  
Luke 5:27-32

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

