

SUNDAY PLUS



Chosen by God

A Year of the Word

The power of witness

by Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

One of the marks of Christianity is that it is founded on experience, not on ideas or philosophy. Some men and women experienced Jesus of Nazareth and they turned their experience into a story and offered it to others as good news. That is put beautifully by the evangelist John in his First Letter: "We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the father and with his Son Jesus' Christ."

Those who have experience can become witnesses. Of course people could have kept their experience of Jesus a secret,

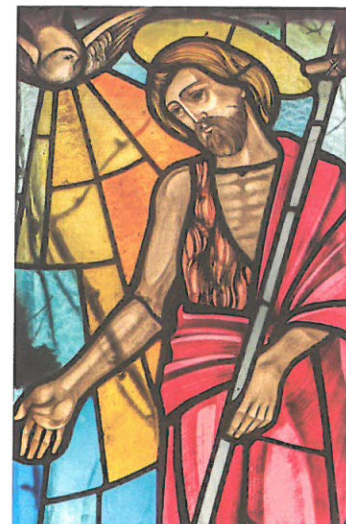
telling no one. When they died there would have been a double funeral: their own and the experience they never shared. Happily the people who knew Jesus shared a compulsion to tell the story, to communicate their life-giving experience. One of the earliest was John the Baptist. And when the evangelist John introduces the great prophet in his Prologue he tells us his role: "He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him."

In today's Gospel you see John the Baptist living out his role as

a witness when he testifies. "I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." The evangelist John never calls him John the Baptist; he calls him John the witness. He is the first great witness to Jesus. Our challenge is to carry on the great example of John and play our part in witnessing to Jesus.

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

Image/ St John the Baptist walking and preaching the Word of God in a stained glass window. Lugo, Italy. [GoneWithTheWind / Shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com)



Chosen and called

by Natasha Pritchard

God chooses the most unlikely people. It is not surprising that the media is fascinated by celebrities such as Mark Wahlberg, the American actor and proudly committed Catholic. He had a colourful past, even ending up in prison, but later God spoke to him and he turned his life around dramatically.

Jesus, in today's Gospel, is described as the "Chosen One of

God". Jesus was not the kind of Messiah that the people of Israel had imagined. They expected a leader who would deliver them from their oppressors. But Jesus came and delivered all people from what really oppresses us: sin, greed, love of power, our unforgiving nature. Our God is a God of surprises, and doesn't always give us the people we're expecting.

And what about you? We are each chosen in some way by God. What unexpected journey might God be calling you towards?

Natasha Pritchard works in Catholic youth ministry and hospital chaplaincy.

Dearest Lord, you love me just as I am. You don't wait for me to become perfect or even just plain good. You love me anyway. Help me to imitate you in my relationships with others, whom you also love even when I don't. Amen.

Chosen and transformed

by Joe Middleton

Have you ever watched *The Great British Sewing Bee*? In each episode the competitors select an article of clothing or fabric and transform it into something entirely different. During the 2019 competition, contestants chose a net curtain, beach umbrella or a festival tent and created clothes which usually bore little resemblance to the original item which had provided the material for the transformation.

If such a change can happen with a piece of cloth, what about when a

person is chosen and called to do something extraordinary? How often has a couple looked back with surprise at their own unexpected patience, generosity and self-sacrifice as a child has transformed them from "ordinary" people into parents? Did they realise that they were becoming a "new creation".

God can provide an even more wonderful surprise. God alone knows all the possible transformations which make us, not something new, but the person we were always meant to be: beautiful, unique and infinitely precious.

Joe Middleton is a father, grandfather and a retired lawyer.

"God does not look to see whether one's face is ugly or fair: He loves! And Jesus does the same: he loves and chooses with love. And he chooses everyone. On his 'list' there are no important people according to worldly criteria: there are common people. The only feature which characterises them all is that 'they are sinners'. Jesus chose sinners. He chooses sinners."

Pope Francis

Today: Isaiah 49:3, 5-6
1 Corinthians 1:1-3
John 1:29-34
Monday: 1 Samuel 15:16-23
Mark 2:18-22
Tuesday: 1 Samuel 16:1-13
Mark 2:23-28
Wednesday: 1 Samuel 17:32-33, 37, 40-51
Mark 3:1-6
Thursday: 1 Samuel 18:6-9; 19:1-7
Mark 3:7-12
Friday: 1 Samuel 24:3-21
Mark 3:13-19
Saturday: Acts 22:3-16 or Acts 9:1-22
Mark 16:15-18
Next Sunday: Isaiah 8:23 - 9:3
1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17
Matthew 4:12-23

