

# SUNDAY PLUS

Share the good news

## Good news to poor people

by Fr Denis  
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C.Ss.R.



**W**hen Jesus left his hometown in Nazareth to travel south and hear John the Baptist, he was known simply as the son of Joseph the carpenter. When he returns after his time with John the Baptist, however, he has radically changed. He is now a prophet/preacher with a clear mission: “to bring good news to the poor”. How will the locals respond? The whole account moves from quick admiration through sour disapproval to violent rejection. Everyone in this village would have known Jesus personally. The Benedictine archaeologist Basil

Pixner observed about Nazareth: “The excavations during recent decades have shown that the population of Nazareth at the time of Jesus could hardly have numbered more than 120-150 people.”

Introducing his sermon with Isaiah 58, Jesus calls to mind an ancient prophet’s critique that their religious practices are wasted energy because they pursue their business – their real devotions – while oppressing the workers and striking the poor man with their fist. When ritual is separated from regard to poor people, it becomes a theatre of the absurd.

Both Isaiah’s and Jesus’ sermons are headlined as “good news to the poor.” The poor are those who are bent over from burdens, the economically destitute, those who are utterly dependent on the kindness of strangers. These are the people who cannot take life or survival for granted. Jesus sees himself in line with the great prophet Isaiah: indeed Isaiah’s words are fulfilled in the person and ministry of Jesus. The dream of Isaiah now becomes the Christian agenda, not only for Jesus but also for all who follow him.

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

## Little and hungry

by Sr Janet Fearn  
FMDM

Healthy and energetic, the elderly woman marched briskly towards the pillarbox near St Peter’s Basilica in Rome. From her huge bag she pulled out a newspaper, a plastic bowl, a cardboard shoebox, a rosary and a selection of holy pictures. She sat on the newspaper, strategically arranged her possessions and then, unaware that I had seen her careful performance, suddenly transformed herself into a helpless cripple, whining that she was “homeless and hungry.” Hah!

Several months later, a well-dressed woman spoke to me as I was about to enter Westminster Cathedral. As it happened, I

genuinely carried no money, having left my purse in the office. Perhaps she didn’t believe me. Her eyes filled with tears. “I’m so hungry”, she declared.

How much had it cost her to ask for help? How many people had been blind to her need? It’s so easy to judge by appearances, isn’t it? Sometimes the greatest need is in the most unexpected places.

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

“**Even if there were no one else left to remember us, Jesus would always be there at our side.**

Pope Francis

## Break free!

by Paul Higginson

In today’s Gospel Jesus says he has been sent to proclaim freedom for prisoners, give sight to the blind and set the oppressed free. At first glance we might think – there’s nothing here for me! And yet, how many of us are prisoners of our own habits and lifestyle, enslaved by our pursuit of “false gods” such as money or status? How many of us are blind to the suffering of those members of God’s family (almost half the world’s population) who, according to UNICEF, live on less than £2 a day? How many of us are oppressed – perhaps by painful memories, guilt or anger over past events, or an unwillingness to forgive others or forgive ourselves? The Good News is for everybody. Jesus has been anointed

and sent to set us free but in order for this to happen we must first of all recognise that we are all in need of help.

Paul Higginson is the Assistant Principal at the Catholic Sixth Form College in Harrow and has been a parish catechist for thirty years.

**Loving Lord, it’s so easy to gossip and spread bad news. If I were to focus on your presence in the people and circumstances of my life, I would discover your Good News everywhere. Help me to be as efficient in proclaiming your message as I am in sharing the local gossip. Amen.**

Today:  
Nehemiah 8:2-6, 8-10  
1 Corinthians 12:12-30  
Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

Monday:  
Hebrews 9:15, 24-28  
Mark 3:22-30

Tuesday:  
Hebrews 10:1-10  
Mark 3:31-35

Wednesday:  
Hebrews 10:11-18  
Mark 4:1-20

Thursday:  
Hebrews 10:19-25  
Mark 4:21-25

Friday:  
Hebrews 10:32-39  
Mark 4:26-34

Saturday:  
Malachi 3:1-4  
Hebrews 2:14-18  
Luke 2:22-40

Next Sunday:  
Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19  
1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13  
Luke 4:21-30