

SUNDAY PLUS

God's grandeur

Thank you

by Sian Owen-Owen

Two experts on African birds had pooled all their resources. "Nothing! According to all our books, this bird does not exist. All we know is that it's a barbet". He indicated the injured bird with its dazzling, iridescent green back and brilliant scarlet throat and front. "Perhaps it's a new species." A couple of days later someone accidentally released the bird before we'd photographed or identified it. Many years later, our unexpected guest remains unique, uniquely beautiful, unidentified – and never seen again.

"If all the birds in the wood were nightingales, a crow would sound sweet." We regularly take crows for

granted and don't always stop to think about a bird's individual identity as a jackdaw, a rook or a carrion crow. As for nightingales, well, most of us never see these nocturnal singers. Perhaps if every bird were a nightingale, we really would appreciate a crow's raucous cacophony. It is easy to identify a jay or a magpie: they are strikingly and attractively different. Who would guess that they are also crows? Does a bird have to look good or sing well in order to be noticed?

Today's Gospel is linked to our celebration of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. Jesus tells us to reach out to people who can't thank us – but when they don't show gratitude,



Statue of St Francis

don't we sometimes feel aggrieved and taken for granted? Do we see "them" and "us" instead of uniquely sacred human beings?

Alternatively, how often does my own attitude and behaviour towards

our beautiful world and its Creator show thanklessness and disrespect? What could I do to change things and to say thank you?

Sian Owen-Owen is a freelance Catholic writer.

"O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes..."

God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth."

Pope Francis

Today's relevance

by Kasia Greenwood

What headlines do we regularly see in today's papers? The rise in homelessness and child poverty; increasing numbers of people using food banks; the enormous threat to our environment from plastics and global warming: they're all there.

So what relevance to today's problems have the words of a man from over 2,000 years ago?

When addressing some Pharisees with whom he was dining, Jesus tells the host to invite "the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind" to their banquet, rather than friends and relations. This is a direct reference to the first-century practice of inviting friends and neighbours in the expectation of reciprocal gestures and building up an honourable reputation.

Jesus asks us to consider how we can help those in need and give to those who cannot repay us. What better way than to show care for creation, both in human form and for the planet we call home? When we reflect on the needs of the modern world, what could be more relevant?

Kasia Greenwood is mother to two children and works in education.

Lord of life and love, help us to care for our beautiful and broken world with your compassion, sensitivity and gentleness + Amen.

A different insight

by Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

How big is our Universe? Try staring into the sky on a starry night. How many constellations can you recognise? Orion's belt makes it easy to identify. Then there are the Plough, Big Dipper, Great Bear... the list continues. What about planets? Can you find Mars, Venus, Saturn and Jupiter?

We are a tiny speck in the Milky Way, but did you know that astronomers estimate that, in our galaxy there are 250 billion stars – plus or minus 150 billion! The Milky Way is home to at least 100 billion planets and yet is itself only one of perhaps 200 billion to 2 trillion galaxies in the observable Universe. The huge numbers are beyond our imagination.

By contrast, there are approximately 3.04 trillion trees in the world. In other words, roughly 422 trees for each one of us – and we think that we are important! Isn't it about time that we started to take better care of our surroundings?

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

Today:
Ecclesiasticus 3:17-20, 28-29
Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24
Luke 14:1, 7-14

Monday:
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Luke 4:16-30

Tuesday:
1 Thessalonians 5:1-6, 9-11
Luke 4:31-37

Tuesday (E) : St Gregory the Great (Feast)
1 Thessalonians 2:2-8
Matthew 16:13-18

Wednesday:
Colossians 1:1-8
Luke 4:38-44

Thursday:
Colossians 1:9-14
Luke 5:1-11

Friday:
Colossians 1:15-20
Luke 5:33-39

Saturday:
Colossians 1:21-23
Luke 6:1-5

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