

SUNDAY PLUS



Turn again

A Year of the Word

The Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand



by Lucy Russell

One of my friends considers me a highly self-aware and reflective person. I think I agree with her, I am self-reflective, and because of that I tend to think I'm right, having paused to reflect. But how do we know we are on the right path? John tells us to repent – to think again – the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Most mornings when I wake up, I say a prayer, asking God to reach out and take my hand. Sometimes it seems as though there is so much to get done and I don't really want to do it. "Hold my hand and lead me, please don't let go."

I like the mental image of reaching up and offering my hand to God – of walking hand in hand with God throughout the day. I don't believe that

God lets go, but sometimes I wonder whether I am allowing myself to be led, or if I am like a young child who has had enough and wants to do something else, pulling against the hand they are holding and dragging their feet. Even when we want to do the right thing, to walk along the right path, it isn't easy. We can be convinced we are doing the right thing, only to discover much later that, in retrospect, we were wrong. Advent is a time to think; to reflect and consider; to start walking perhaps, and then to stop and think again. The kingdom of heaven is close at hand.

Dr Lucy Russell's book, *Who do you say you are?* is available from Redemptorist Publications: www.rpbooks.co.uk

Behind bars

by James Gallogly

Within our prison walls, we have recently formed the St Thomas More Conference of the St Vincent De Paul Society. A small group of men, familiar with the work of the society, wondered if their support for others counted. "Of course!" I said. The Manchester District Council agreed and was extremely helpful in making the birth of our group quite painless.

The group functions like any SVP Conference: deepening

Vincentian warm friendship, seeking the forgotten and being generous with time, possessions and self. This can include making sense of formal letters or replying to a loved one when literacy skills are weak; listening to someone who is anxious; providing a soothing word when calm is required – the list is endless. John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees to, "bear fruit worthy of repentance." I think our little group, in a prophetic way, is doing just that.

James Gallogly is a lay Catholic prison chaplain.

Turning our lives around

by Sr Thérèse Garman SMP

In today's Gospel, John poses a challenging question: Do we care enough to change our lives and our world? Do we love enough to be angry about the sufferings of others? Anger and love are not opposed to each other. It is indifference that shows a lack of love. John is pleading with us to show sorrow for our indifference and turn our lives around. "Repent!" he begs me today. Honest repentance will free me from the past and enable

me to look forward in hope. So what must I do to let go and change? I may often say "sorry", but do I actively show that I mean what I say? It's the work of a lifetime. It means changing our attitudes and the way we treat others. It means responding to God's call to be a missionary by showing God's love to a confused and hurting world and removing all internal and external obstacles to our faith journey. Start time: Today!

Sr Thérèse Garman is a Sister of Our Lady of Providence.

"At home, when we await the visit of a dear person, we prepare everything with care and gladness. In the same way, we want to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord: to await him each day attentively, so as to be filled by his grace when he comes."

Pope Francis

Loving Lord, let me prepare for your coming so that my heart will become a beautiful home for you and for all those whom I love. Let my life overflow with your love
✠ Amen.

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Diary 2020
Denis McBride



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Today: Isaiah 11:1-10 Romans 15:4-9 Matthew 3:1-12	Monday: Genesis 3:9-15, 20 Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12 Luke 1:26-38	Tuesday: Isaiah 40:1-11 Matthew 18:12-14	Wednesday: Isaiah 40:25-31 Matthew 11:28-30	Thursday: Isaiah 41:13-20 Matthew 11:11-15	Friday: Isaiah 48:17-19 Matthew 11:16-19	Saturday: Ecclesiasticus 48:1-4, 9-11 Matthew 17:10-13	Next Sunday: Isaiah 35:1-6, 10 James 5:7-10 Matthew 11:2-11
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