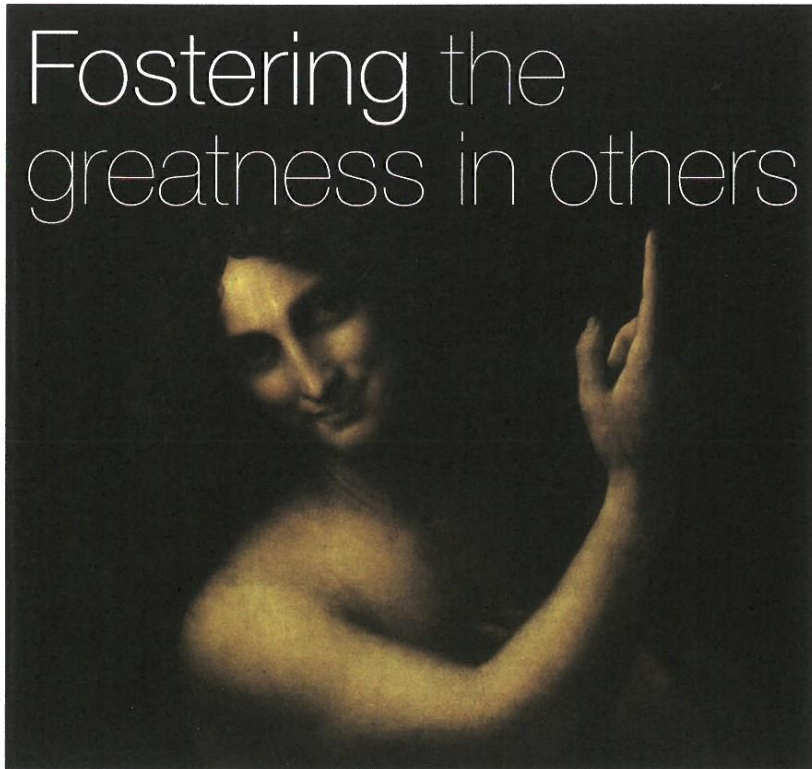


# SUNDAY PLUS

Love always



*Saint John the Baptist, Leonardo da Vinci.*

## Fostering the greatness in others

By Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

The purpose of John the Baptist's energetic renewal movement is to prepare for the one who is to come. And we know that "one" to be Jesus of Nazareth. Although John has his own group of disciples, he does not make himself the focus of his prophetic witness; he does not claim that he is the way, the truth and the life. "Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals." John understands his own powerful place within the larger context of God's plan and this frees him to defer to the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit. Jesus' greatness does not diminish John's importance; John is important precisely because of who Jesus is.

John's way is a challenge to all of us: to foster the greatness in others without feeling threatened about the value of our own contribution, to be free to celebrate the importance of others because we have a sense of our own worth and value before God. John manages to do all this and, not surprisingly, Jesus will return the compliment when he speaks about John to the crowds, telling them that there is no greater mother's son than John the Baptist.

As the relationship between John and Jesus teaches us, the generosity in recognising the goodness in others can help them call out the good that is in ourselves. When that happens, there are no losers.

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

Loving Lord, prepare my heart to welcome you and to love you with every breath that I breathe.  Amen.

## Love which embraces

By Michael George

"The course of true love never did run smooth," Lysander says in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Rewards of love are great; demands of love are real too. Only by accepting the demands can the course be smoothed or straightened.

The demands of love are embraced in John the Baptist: selflessness, humility and service. True love turns the focus

from oneself onto the subject of the love.

John embraced the demands of love so that others could be prepared to receive the love of Jesus.

Today we are invited to reflect on the straightness of our own paths and – like John – to embrace the demands of love. We can be confident that any bumps on the path between ourselves and Jesus' love have not been put there by Jesus. True love embraces demands; then Jesus' love is shared and returned as freely and abundantly as it is given us to receive.

*Michael George has served Catholic primary schools as a teacher and headteacher for more than twenty years.*

[Jesus] suffers when he sees in our own day and in many parts of the world ways of exercising power that feed on oppression and violence, seeking to expand their own space by restricting that of others, imposing their own domination and restricting basic freedoms, and in this way oppressing the weak.

Pope Francis

Feast of the week  
Tuesday 12 December



## Our Lady of Guadalupe

Our Lady is something of a linguist! When she appeared to St Bernadette, she spoke the same patois, or informal dialect, which was spoken by the people of Lourdes. At Fatima, the three children heard Portuguese. Similarly, when she appeared to an Aztec peasant, Juan Diego, on 9 December 1531 near the town of Guadalupe, Mexico, she used Nahuatl, his native language.

In the truly Mexican image subsequently imprinted on Diego's cloak when he appeared before the bishop, Mary was dark-skinned like him and wore robes which immediately identified her as royalty. Her black sash showed that she was pregnant and the four-petaled floral decoration on her dress, which symbolised, to the Aztecs, the God above their many deities, declared her to be the Mother of God.

Our Lady of Guadalupe became the patroness of the Americas, but especially of the indigenous people of Mexico. Her most famous words spoken during her several appearances were "Am I not here, I who am your mother?" A mother speaks the same language as her children, doesn't she? Why should Our Lady be any different?

Today:  
Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11  
2 Peter 3:8-14  
Mark 1:1-8

Monday:  
Isaiah 35:1-10  
Luke 5:17-26

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 61:1-2, 10-11  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
John 1:6-8, 19-28

