

SUNDAY PLUS

God in everybody I meet

Complementary, not exclusive



By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

It's an unforgettable experience. "Yesterday, I could see. Today, I can't!" The first retinal detachment is scary. The unexpected impenetrable dark-grey curtain raises a long list of questions, most importantly asking if the blindness is reversible. By the fourth such incident, most of the questions have been answered and although it is still an emergency, there's also a sense of routine. The

they regarded his blindness as the result of sin, either personal or parental. Now, he would be an object of wonder and an "ordinary" life would be extraordinary.

"I studied ophthalmology because it was exciting to know how much could be done inside such a small organ." The intricate beauty of the human eye filled the ophthalmologist with wonder whereas I appreciated the skill which repaired my damaged retina.

sight loss is possibly not permanent and, even if, on this occasion, it turns out to be so, potential strategies for the future accompany the journey to the operating theatre. There's also gratitude for the blessing of a functional eye. (God's great for the number of spare parts he's given us!)

The blind man in today's Gospel had no experience of sight so he had a mind-blowing encounter with the world following his miraculous healing. He also discovered that people would treat him differently. Beforehand,

Happiness happens when we can appreciate each other and celebrate our differences. Our skills and talents are complementary, not exclusive. The blind man needed Jesus before he could see – but his story helped Jesus to spread the message of compassion. We might never know how we have touched other people's hearts – but isn't it worth the effort?

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

Seeing differently

By Paul Higginson

Jesus wants to open our eyes, to see things differently. Similarly, Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, urges us to understand the world around us as "a sacrament of communion", to see that Christ is present in the people, places and moments of our day, connecting with us in all our human experiences. Being a Christian is therefore not primarily about going to

church or believing in doctrine. A Christian is a person who sees Christ in other people. Try looking at the world today with a fresh pair of eyes, look at things as if for the first time. God is unchanging: we are the ones who need to change. Can we see the holy, the goodness of God that is already there, right in front of our noses? It's not so hard to find God if you know where to look – and where to look is everywhere.

Following decades in the classroom and as a parish catechist, Paul Higginson is finding that retirement gives him even more opportunities to support his parish.

Lord of light,
my eyes are
important but
the eyes of my
heart are even
more valuable.
Open the eyes
of my heart
to see you in
everything I say,
think and do.
Let me see you
in everybody
I meet.
✝ Amen.

In a word: charity cannot be neutral, antiseptic, indifferent, lukewarm or impartial! Charity is infectious, it excites, it risks and it engages! For true charity is always unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous! Charity is creative in finding the right words to speak to all those considered incurable and hence untouchable. Finding the right words...

Pope Francis

Feast of the week
Sunday 19 March

St Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Joseph is a "protector" because he is able to hear God's voice and be guided by his will; and for this reason, he is all the more sensitive to the persons entrusted to his safekeeping. He can look at things realistically. He is in touch with his surroundings. He can make truly wise decisions. In him, dear friends, we learn how to respond to God's call, readily and willingly.

Here I would add one more thing: caring, protecting, demands goodness, it calls for a certain tenderness. In the Gospels, St Joseph appears as a strong and courageous man, a working man, yet in his heart we see great tenderness, which is not the virtue of the weak but rather a sign of strength of spirit and a capacity for concern, for compassion, for genuine openness to others, for love. We must not be afraid of goodness, of tenderness!

Pope Francis

Today:
1 Samuel 16:1, 6-7, 10-13
Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41

Monday:
2 Samuel 7:4-5, 12-14, 16
Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22
Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24

Tuesday:
Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12
John 5:1-3, 5-16

Wednesday:
Isaiah 49:8-15
John 5:17-30

Thursday:
Exodus 32:7-14
John 5:31-47

Friday:
Wisdom 2:1, 12-22
John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Saturday:
Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10
Hebrews 10:4-10
Luke 1:26-38

Next Sunday:
Ezekiel 37:12-14
Romans 8:8-11
John 11:1-45