

SUNDAY PLUS

Heavenly!

“Heaven lies about us”

Mary Bell

A teacher colleague had returned from a school trip to a local brewery where she was given a free sample. This was a substance called wort, the malt extract that combined with yeast is essential to the brewing process. She took it home and put it in the fridge. Her husband, mistaking the yellow, jelly-like wedge for pate, had a very nasty shock when he bit into his toast. Yeast, a pungent, rather evil-smelling substance, is a

useful agent, not only in brewing but also in bread-making. Jesus uses the image of the pervasive effect of yeast in flour to suggest that it is like the spread of the kingdom of heaven. As the yeast works its seeming magic in flour to make the bread rise, so the happiness of heaven will weave our lives if we listen to the word of God and follow it.

Jesus’ parables of the kingdom were very relevant to the lives of the mainly rural community of farmers and fishing folk to whom he was speaking.



Yet how important for all of us is the message!

This kingdom of heaven is everywhere: it spreads wide its branches; it grows like wheat. It is grounded in the basic soil of human lives.

“Heaven lies about us in our infancy”, says the poet Wordsworth.

Yet it surrounds us throughout our lives in the fields and growing things. We must see it and nurture it. It is the sign of the enduring love of God and the hope of our salvation.

Following many years in the classroom, retired teacher and Head of RE Mary Bell now has time to enjoy the beauties of the natural world around her.

Hope is a little like leaven that expands our souls. There are difficult moments in life, but with hope the soul goes forward and looks ahead to what awaits us. Today is a day of hope.

Pope Francis

A single word

by Canon Paul Douthwaite

When I was a prison chaplain, there remained only two cap-wearing officers, their caps symbolic of their length of service and experience. I witnessed one of these officers diffusing a highly charged, and what could have been a violent, situation. Two prisoners were about to attack each other and, with a simple utterance of “Now, lads” issued by the officer of many years, the situation was diffused and the altercation averted.

Jesus reminds us in the Gospel that the smallest contribution can make the most significant difference. Yeast, in size and quantity, the smallest ingredient, is actually the most important and crucial of all. Without yeast, bread would not resemble or taste like bread.

The yeast signifies the ingredient which is essential to produce a good, wholesome and life-giving result. The yeast in many of our life encounters can be a simple word or two. A simple utterance of “Now, lads” can change lives.

Canon Paul Douthwaite is a former CBCEW National Catholic Chaplain for Prisons and HMPPS Roman Catholic Faith Advisor.

Feast of the week Saturday 29 July



Ss Martha, Mary and Lazarus


Martha, Mary and Lazarus loved their friend Jesus but there must have been times when his arrival was inconvenient. He probably didn’t come alone, was accompanied by at least twelve hungry fishermen and arrived unannounced. Local culture dictated that a guest need not warn of their arrival nor ask for food: it was presumed that there would be a welcome and that a meal would be “encouraged” to feed everyone. Presumably the disciples might have carried a gift of fish but was it considered bad manners, as in some other cultures,

to bring basic ingredients such as flour, thereby implying that the hosts might have insufficient food in their house? Did the visitors occasionally almost eat their hosts “out of house and home”?

On at least one occasion, Martha cooked whilst Mary sat and listened to Jesus. Lazarus – as a man – relaxed with Jesus and the disciples.

Jesus felt welcome, loved and safe with this family. What a wonderful tribute to Martha, Mary and Lazarus!

Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

Help me, Lord, to combine the practical generosity of Martha with the quiet listening of Mary. However busy I might be, let my heart rest in you.  Amen.

Today: Wisdom 12:13, 16-19
Romans 8:26-27
Matthew 13:24-43

Monday: Exodus 14:5-18
Matthew 12:38-42

Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 4:7-15
Matthew 20:20-28

Wednesday: Exodus 16:1-5, 9-15
Matthew 13:1-9

Thursday: Exodus 19:1-2, 9-11, 16-20
Matthew 13:10-17

Friday: Exodus 20:1-17
Matthew 13:18-23

Saturday: 1 John 4:7-16
John 11:19-27

Next Sunday: 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12
Romans 8:28-30
Matthew 13:44-52