

# SUNDAY PLUS

Celebrate family

## The confidence to leave home



By Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

Parents are the first teachers of love; their attachment to their children shows them that they are worthy of love, shows them how to love. It is very hard for a child to grow up without the caring support of that attachment. And Luke shows us in today's Gospel how the parents of Jesus fulfil the requirements of their religious tradition, and how the child Jesus grows in wisdom and maturity under their care.

From the mutual love between Mary and Joseph and from their love of him, the child Jesus will be schooled in love and grow in the security of their attachment to him. To know the meaning of love, Jesus will only have to consult his experience.

That love will give him the security and the freedom which will enable him to become himself, and although he is more than Mary and Joseph can ever give him, their influence on him can never be underestimated. The time will come when Jesus – like all children – must separate himself from his family to make his own way in life; but as a child he is wholly dependent on the love that is offered from his own family. That is the glory and the limit of his humanity.

The fact that Jesus will later leave home, gather his own disciples, travel around Galilee and Judea preaching and healing the sick, confront the religious authorities – all this is a measure of Jesus' confidence as he moves beyond the loving support of his family.

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

Lord, it's not always easy to be welcoming to other people. Sometimes it's inconvenient. Teach me to see them with your eyes and love them with your heart.  Amen.

### A cup of water

By Sr Mary Burke FMDM

Jesus knows what it is like to receive "so much" as a cup of cold water. In the often-parched land of Israel, a cup of cold water could mean the difference between life and death. Water was often scarce and always welcome.

Giving a cup of water is an act of reaching out, of welcome and of acknowledging the other. Often the smallest act of welcome

changes the dynamic of our encounters. Significant for us also as followers of Christ is the statement "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me".

So, when we welcome another into our homes, our hearts and our lives, it is indeed Christ himself who comes among us. We might surmise that in failing to welcome those who come to us, even by not giving them the smallest thing such as a cup of cold water, we are in danger of neglecting to offer hospitality to Christ himself!

*Sr Mary Burke is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.*

Jesus is the home of hospitality. And how much good we can do, if only we try to speak this language of hospitality, this language of receiving and welcoming. How much pain can be soothed, how much despair can be allayed in a place where we feel at home! This requires open doors, especially the doors of our heart.

Pope Francis

Feast of the week

Monday 1 January

Mary, the holy Mother of God

Early Christians readily accepted Mary as the mother of Jesus, the man who was born, lived and died in Israel. After all, every human being has a mother. If Jesus was also God and Mary was his mother, then that logically made her the Mother of God. They even used the title Theotokos, which literally means "God-bearer."

In the fifth century, theologians tried to explain how Jesus could be both divine and human, immortal and mortal. If Jesus was truly God and truly human, was Mary, the human mother of Jesus, also the Mother of God? Was he one person or two inside the one body?

In 431 A.D. at the Council of Ephesus, the Church declared that Jesus was one person with a divine nature and a human nature. Mary didn't just give Jesus a human body: she gave birth to the whole person, Jesus, who was both God and man. That's why Mary is both the mother of the human Jesus and Mother of God.

Today:  
Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3  
Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19  
Luke 2:22-40

Monday:  
Numbers 6:22-27  
Galatians 4:4-7  
Luke 2:16-21

Tuesday:  
1 John 2:22-28  
John 1:19-28

Wednesday:  
1 John 2:29 – 3:6  
John 1:29-34

Thursday:  
1 John 3:7-10  
John 1:35-42

Friday:  
1 John 3:11-21  
John 1:43-51

Saturday:  
1 John 5:5-13  
Mark 1:7-11

Saturday:  
Isaiah 60:1-6  
Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6  
Matthew 2:1-12

Next Sunday:  
Isaiah 60:1-6  
Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6  
Matthew 2:1-12