

SUNDAY PLUS

One in hope

Something different

By Michael George



Sixteen and thirteen years ago, the baptisms of my children took place during Sunday Masses. The whole regular Sunday Mass congregations were witnesses to their baptisms: my children were immediately and physically united with the whole parish as baptised members of Christ's Church. We were all together as one community or as one body, one in prayer, one in faith and one in hope.

I am reminded of my daughter's and my son's baptisms by the fact that today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. The sense of "oneness" and community enters my mind when reading St Paul's words in today's second reading. There need be no sense of competition when it comes to salvation; through God's grace salvation is possible for all.

In the Gospel, people were baptised by John; then they were awakened to the realisation that Christ was still to come. When my daughter was baptised, she was asleep as I carried her in my arms to the font. She awoke, startled but silent, when the priest, who was standing right beside us and was not wearing a microphone, raised his voice while speaking so that everybody could hear. She awoke with a jolt, even as a little baby realising that something different was taking place. Her baptism involved a literal awakening.

One in hope, may our hearts be awakened today, that we may build one another up and support one another, as together we seek to attain the salvation made possible by Christ.

Michael George has worked in Catholic schools in the south of England for 25 years, as teacher, Headteacher and chaplain.



Jesus is more than a friend. He is a teacher of truth and life who shows us the way that leads to happiness.

Pope Francis

Jubilee 2025

Church of St Prisca

St Prisca's church in Rome is approximately one mile from the Mamertime Prison, where Ss Peter, Paul and other early Christians were held captive. Notorious for its terrible conditions, as elsewhere, prisoners depended on food supplied by people whom they knew "on the outside". Was Prisca, a first-century young martyr

whom, as a thirteen-year-old, St Paul apparently baptised, one of those who helped to bribe the guards and feed those who would soon die for their faith? We don't know. Concrete information about Prisca is hard to find, especially as her death is surrounded by legends of miraculous – and perhaps unlikely – events such

as the Coliseum lions refusing to attack her. People wanted to show that power and brutality can be overcome by gentleness – and so the stories appeared. It seems that Prisca was possibly tortured and eventually beheaded. The church of St Prisca is considered one of Rome's most important Christian sites – hence its choice as a Jubilee Church.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: 18-25 January

At least once a year, Christians are reminded of Jesus' prayer for his disciples that "they may be one so that the world may believe" (see John 17:21). Hearts are touched and Christians come together


to pray for their unity. Congregations and parishes all over the world exchange preachers or arrange special ecumenical celebrations and prayer services. The event that touches off this special experience is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Traditionally the week of prayer is celebrated between 18-25 January. In the southern hemisphere, where January is a vacation time, churches often find other days to celebrate it,

for example around Pentecost, which is also a symbolic date for unity.

2025 marks the 1,700th anniversary of the first Christian Ecumenical Council, held in Nicaea, near Constantinople, in AD 325. This commemoration provides a unique opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the common faith of Christians, as expressed in the creed formulated during this council.

The World Council of Churches

Dearest Lord, none of us can live without hope. Give hope to those who cannot find it and give them a reason for laughter.  Amen.

Today: Isaiah 42: 1-4, 6-7
Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7
Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

Monday: Hebrews 1:1-6
Mark 1:14-20

Tuesday: Hebrews 2:5-12
Mark 1:21-28

Wednesday: Hebrews 2:14-18
Mark 1:29-39

Thursday: Hebrews 3:7-14
Mark 1:40-45

Friday: Hebrews 4:1-5, 11
Mark 2:1-12

Saturday: Hebrews 4:12-16
Mark 2:13-17

Next Sunday: Isaiah 62:1-5
1 Corinthians 12:4-11
John 2:1-11