

SUNDAY PLUS

Challenge to hope

There's always hope

By Mary Bell

Look in any newspaper: watch any news broadcast. What are they full of? Stories of disaster, hopelessness, all the catastrophes you could think of. The pilgrimage of our lives is a journey of ups and downs no matter who we are.

Yet it is the chief message of God's Good News that there is no place to which the mercy of God does not extend, whatever the difficulties in which we find ourselves, as the prophet Jonah discovered at the bottom of the sea.

Jesus' words to Peter, "Do not be afraid", are our assurance: he will be there to guide us. We must have hope in God to help us.

Sometimes people lose all hope when life turns against them and they think that God has abandoned them. However, others, in the most trying circumstances, do not despair. I think of a lovely, lively friend who, when terminally ill, was devastated that she could no longer swallow Holy Communion but she put her trust in Jesus. Look around the church at the



possibly grey or white hair of those keeping the faith, despite their age and infirmity.

Peter is such a good example: he always expresses the normal reactions of the ordinary person. After hesitating before letting down his nets he apologises to Jesus for his lack of faith. But Jesus recruits him all the same to spread his word. So, we too, imperfect as we are, are called to be apostles. We are to spread the Good News that there is always hope

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.

The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus... With Christ joy is constantly born anew.

Pope Francis

Transforming hope

By James Gallogly

Why do something if you know it will fail? Madness, eh? Jesus challenges Simon to put out his nets in unfavourable conditions. Despite his local knowledge, Simon trusts. As a prison chaplain I constantly fish in apparently fruitless waters. It is a challenge to hope, but one that is full of surprises. The reality that God can provide a harvest of fish or of

peaceful relationships is awesome. Yet just as Simon is left in wonder, so too are men of violence.

Through exposure to the word of God, human trust and some valuable pro-social modelling, a new way of living becomes possible. The acknowledgement that it is, "the grace of God that is within me" is a staggering thing to hear. It is a reassuring re-enforcement of my desire to trust in God. It helps to keep me positive as I continue to look for hope in murky waters.

James Gallogly is a lay Catholic chaplain in a UK prison.

Jubilee 2025

Reconciliation

Jubilee, pilgrimage and reconciliation go together. Humanly speaking, travelling with someone means that we get to know each other better. We don't make our friends simply by reading about them in a book or on social media. We spend time with them, talk to them and learn what makes them "tick". It's the same in our relationship with God. We could read the Bible all day, every day, but we only know and love God through experiencing and enjoying his

company, conversation and love. The Jubilee pilgrimage, even if physically we stay between our home and workplace, is a journey deep into our heart, where God is found. Reconciliation is nothing other than clearing out the clutter so that God can occupy, not just a part, but the whole of our heart. The sacrament of reconciliation helps the decluttering and healing processes – which is why it plays such an important part in the Jubilee celebration.

Forgiving Lord, I sometimes find it difficult to say "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you". Help me to follow your example of forgiveness and compassion. 🙏 Amen.



Today:
Isaiah 6:1-8
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Luke 5:1-11

Monday:
Genesis 1:1-19
Mark 6:53-56

Tuesday:
Genesis 1:20 – 2:4
Mark 7:1-13

Wednesday:
Genesis 2:4-9, 15-17
Mark 7:14-23

Thursday:
Genesis 2:18-25
Mark 7:24-30

Friday:
Genesis 3:1-8
Mark 7:31-37

Saturday:
Genesis 3:9-24
Mark 8:1-10

Next Sunday:
Jeremiah 17:5-8
1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20
Luke 6:17, 20-26