

# SUNDAY PLUS

Searching for hope

## Come as you are



By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

**H**ow and why did our conversation turn to ancestry? My late friend was directly descended from the legendary highwayman, Dick Turpin (1705-1739). In those pre-computer and online fact-checking days, was my great-great-grandfather the judge who found him guilty of the capital crime of horse theft? In Turpin's time, our families wouldn't have mixed or shared their escapades and court cases. As it happens, I now know that my ancestor was born seventy-two years after Turpin, who must surely have kept some activities secret for fear of the legal consequences. If they could have met, Turpin and my great-great-grandfather couldn't have relaxed and been themselves: one was a fugitive from justice and the other obliged to implement it.

Jesus attracted society's "little" people, including the despised tax collectors and sinners. The so-called "great and the good" often stayed at a distance, showing themselves uncontaminated by crime, sin and unimportance. Yet their criticism revealed something important: people weren't afraid that Jesus would reject them. Regardless of their past and present circumstances, "the crowds" instinctively saw someone whose interests didn't depend upon celebrity status, but on his face-to-face encounters with the outcasts, the overlooked, the abandoned and the "lost". People anywhere and everywhere could find Jesus, confident of his welcome and acceptance and with no need to "put on a show".

Today, as we celebrate the Jubilee of the Missionaries of Mercy, we remember that God knows who we are and isn't looking for a good performance. Jesus says to each of us, "Come as you are. That's how I love you."

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

Don't be afraid, go to [God], he is waiting for you, he will take care of everything. We hear many offers from the world around us; but let us take up God's offer instead: his is a caress of love. For God, we are not numbers, we are important, indeed we are the most important thing to him; even if we are sinners, we are what is closest to his heart.

Pope Francis


## Don't give up

By Paul Higginson

Today's Gospel illustrates a universal and neglected truth. We often grow in wisdom not from our spiritual success stories, but through our sinfulness, failure and suffering. The prodigal son creates a totally new loving relationship with his father after his disastrous life choices have led him to a dead end. The last shall be first – there is hope for us all.

Life for many of us is difficult and we can be tempted to give up or turn from the spiritual path. But Jesus tells us in this parable that the Father is waiting at the bedroom window, hoping for our return. What happens when God sees us? Pause awhile and consider Jesus' explanation, which tells us exactly who God is: "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly."

*Paul Higginson is a retired teacher and author of Doing Christianity: how religion is about what you do, not what you believe.*

Lord, Father of our human family... may our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the earth. May we recognise the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us, and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects, and shared dreams.  Amen.

*Fratelli Tutti, 287*



Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope

## The Missionaries of Mercy

The Missionaries of Mercy are a worldwide group of priests established by Pope Francis in 2015 during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. They are meant to be living signs of God's mercy, forgiveness and compassion, especially through the sacrament of reconciliation.

As Pope Francis said to them in 2022, "I asked you to be a sign of consolation to help those who approach you to grasp the just sentiment that God never forgets anyone, nor does he abandon anyone..."

We too are invited to grasp the presence of God in the life of people. The journey that must be experienced is often arduous, difficult, at times even full of sadness; God, however, places himself on this path to reveal his love. It is up to us, with our ministry, to give voice to God and to show the face of his mercy... to envelop with its warmth all those who approach you to be forgiven."

Today:  
Joshua 5:9a-12  
2 Corinthians 5:17-21  
Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Monday:  
Isaiah 65:17-21  
John 4:43-54

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

Saturday:  
Jeremiah 11:18-20  
John 7:40-52

Next Sunday:  
Isaiah 43:16-21  
Philippians 3:8-14  
John 8:1-11