

SUNDAY PLUS

Forgiveness freely available

No one deserves mercy

By Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

The story is told of a young French soldier who deserted Napoleon's army but who, within a matter of hours, was caught by his own troops. To discourage soldiers from abandoning their posts the penalty for desertion was death. The young soldier's mother heard what had happened and went to plead with Napoleon to spare the life of her son. Napoleon heard her plea but pointed out that because of the serious nature of the crime her son had committed he clearly did not deserve mercy. "I know he doesn't deserve mercy," the mother answered. "It wouldn't be mercy if he deserved it."

That is the point about mercy: nobody deserves it. Everyone deserves true justice; mercy, on the other hand, is sheer gift. Mercy cancels out wrongs and transgressions – not because a sparkling

defence has been found or excusing causes have been skilfully argued, but because that is the free response of the person who is grieved. Mercy does not suggest that the guilty are not guilty; it recognises the guilt but does not demand satisfaction for the wrong. In all this, mercy reflects the utter graciousness of the one who has been wronged.

To the woman caught committing adultery and her accusers Jesus does not say the woman is innocent or argue that adultery should be taken off the books; but neither is he persuaded about the innocence of her accusers. In the Prologue to his Gospel John announced that while the Law came through Moses, grace and truth comes through Jesus. Now Jesus puts grace alongside truth and forgives the woman.

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbbooks.co.uk.

There is no sin that God cannot pardon.
All we need to do is ask for forgiveness.

Pope Francis

Judge not!

By Catherine Pepinster

How frustrating this Gospel passage is! We read that when scribes and pharisees brought a woman to Jesus saying that she should be stoned to death because she had been caught in adultery, he twice wrote with his finger on the ground. Yet John never tells us what was written, while these men tried to catch Jesus out and humiliate this woman.

Yet there is symbolism in Jesus' writing in the dust. The scribes and pharisees – the men whose role it was to copy the scriptures, word by word – adhere rigidly to the Law, as if it can never be interpreted differently. But Jesus changes everything, like the wind blowing away words written in the dust. For the woman before him, as for all his followers, he offers the chance to start again – to "sin no more" as well as showing compassion rather than a harsh judgement: a message that will stand the test of time.

Writer, journalist and historian, Catherine Pepinster, a former Editor of The Tablet, is a regular contributor to Redemptorist Publications.

Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope



May we see the plight of all those who suffer in our midst. Give us courage and compassion to live in solidarity with the suffering. May our hearts, burning with love, bear the burdens of all in our care. And may our loving example ignite the hearts of others to accompany the vulnerable in their affliction. Amen.

Catholic Health Association
of the United States

Lord, it's sometimes easier to forgive others than it is to forgive myself. Take me into your hands and help me to see that you are more forgiving than I am. ☪ Amen.

Today: Isaiah 43:16-21, Philippians 3:8-14, John 8:1-11
Monday: Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62
Tuesday: Numbers 21:4-9, John 8:21-30
Wednesday: Daniel 3:14-20, 24-25, 28, John 8:31-42
Thursday: Genesis 17:3-9, John 8:51-59
Friday: Jeremiah 20:10-13, John 10:31-42
Saturday: Ezekiel 37:21-28, John 11:45-56
Next Sunday: Procession: Luke 19:28-40
Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7, Philippians 2:6-11, Luke 22:14 – 23:56

Redemptorist Publications

Sunday Plus. Edited by Denis McBride C.Ss.R. and Sr Janet Fearn FMDM. Copyright © Redemptorist Publications, Chawton, Hampshire, GU34 3HQ. A registered charity limited by guarantee. Registered in England 03261721. www.rpbbooks.co.uk.



www.facebook.com/sundayplus

