

# SUNDAY *Plus*

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time **Divine Office Week II** Year A**E & W: Peace Day**  
18-25 January: Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity

## A new start



Baptism of Christ. Chapel of the Convent of the Holy Trinity in Lomnica, Vranov, Slovakia. Adam Jan Figel / Shutterstock.com.

One of the most frequently travelled roads between Jerusalem and Galilee ran through this region [of the River Jordan]. Near where it crossed the river, at a place called Bethabara, John began to preach from a natural pulpit among the rocks overlooking the grove of sycamores that sheltered his listeners from the burning sun of midday pouring down upon John's own unprotected head...

As word of John's fiery preaching in the wilderness began to spread, more and more people stopped on the way to and from Jerusalem to hear him. There had not been a real prophet in Israel for hundreds of years...

Bethabara could hardly be called a town. Actually, it was little more than a customs station where the traveller from Jerusalem passed from the area

ruled by the Roman Procurator, Pontius Pilate, into the region presided over by Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea. A small post of frontier guards was stationed at the fords, more to keep order than to disturb the travellers, who could move freely from any part of the Roman Empire to another so long as they paid the necessary tolls.

John understood that baptism was not, in Jesus' case, an act of repentance, an acknowledgement of sin and a washing away of all uncleanness, as it had been with the others he had baptised. Instead, this was Jesus' way of publicly announcing his subservience to the will of his Father and his willingness from thenceforward to do only God's purpose.

*Frank G. Slaughter, The Crown and the Cross: the life of Christ*


Listening is what allows us to enter into true dialogue.

Pope Leo

## Looking for God

And if you would know God,  
be not therefore a solver of riddles.  
Rather look about you and  
you shall see him playing with your children.  
And look into space;  
you shall see him walking in the cloud, outstretching  
his arms in the lightning and descending in rain.  
You shall see him smiling in flowers,  
then rising and waving his hands in trees.

*Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet*

May the cross of Christ also guide us on our daily journey towards full unity, in harmony with one another and with all creation.  Amen.



*Saints*

## St Mary Magdalene: betrayal, repentance, forgiveness

By Sr Thérèse Garman OLP

We first meet Mary in Luke 8:1-3, having been freed from evil spirits. It is not said, but it is strongly suggested, that Jesus freed her. She abandoned her former life and accompanied Jesus. Mary was there at the crucifixion; present also when his body was placed in the tomb. She was the first to meet the risen Lord and to announce this good news. Hers is a story of transformation, demonstrating that Jesus can change our lives, freeing us from old ways and leading us into his new way, involving evangelisation: Mary joyfully told others that Jesus was risen because she had met him. That message is given to us to share also. Through us, Jesus still reaches out to people who are marginalised, including them in his circle of friends and giving them a place on his mission team. Mary reminds us of the great privilege we have been given, which is to tell others about our encounter with the risen Lord and the difference he is making in our lives.

*Sr Thérèse Garman is a Sister of Our Lady of Providence and a treasured former member of the Redemptorist Publications Editorial Team.*

## READINGS

**Today:**  
Isaiah 49:3, 5-6  
1 Corinthians 1:1-3  
John 1:29-34

**Monday:**  
1 Samuel 15:16-23  
Mark 2:18-22

**Tuesday:**  
1 Samuel 16:1-13  
Mark 2:23-28

**Wednesday:**  
1 Samuel 17:32-33, 37, 40-51  
Mark 3:1-6

**Thursday:**  
1 Samuel 18:6-9; 19:1-7  
Mark 3:7-12

**Friday:**  
1 Samuel 24:3-21  
Mark 3:13-19

**Saturday:**  
2 Samuel 1:1-4, 11-12, 19, 23-27  
Mark 3:20-21

**Next Sunday:**  
Isaiah 8:23 - 9:3  
1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17  
Matthew 4:12-23