

# SUNDAY PLUS

Cherish the unexpected

A Year of the Word

## Become the cornerstone

by Fr Paul Douthwaite

As in to the Gospels of Mark and Luke, Matthew recalls Jesus presenting the parable of the wicked tenants to the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem just before his passion. This is one of a number of parables in which Jesus challenges their dishonest behaviour, hidden behind their religious practice, by promoting the Good News he brings as the Son of God.

As with our society today, it was not uncommon for wealthy people at the time of Jesus to buy and rent out property. However, the property was often a farm, or a vineyard and the price demanded was the produce of the land. In this parable, the tenants, often described as “wicked”, went back on their agreement, refused to hand over the produce and attempted to keep it for their own pleasure. In presenting this parable, Jesus likens the behaviour of the tenants to the behaviour of the Jewish leaders who, in the name of religion and abusing the trust God had put in them, misused that which

the people had given as a divine offering to fund their lavish lives.

Jesus, speaking of his own ministry as Son of God, predicts his passion and death in terms of a rejected cornerstone. The cornerstone was different to the regular and expected shape of building stones but crucial for the structure to stand. Many of those who first encountered Jesus and his unexpected good news rejected them. It was the latecomers who eagerly accepted and cherished both Jesus and his message.

Fr Paul Douthwaite is the National Catholic Chaplain for Prisons

## Life's surprises

by Catherine Pepinster

Nowadays it's very easy to take for granted all the effort that goes into producing a bottle of wine. It's something we can easily buy from the supermarket shelf. But growing any kind of crop is a precarious business. The readings today remind us of all that can go wrong, even if the vine grower thinks he has taken care: the state of the soil, the weather, even the workers who turn out to be untrustworthy can ruin horticulture. Isaiah tells us the vineyard owner complained that his harvest was sour grapes; his response to destroy the vineyard in anger was indeed sour grapes too. Can we respond with more hope to what unexpectedly befalls us? Paul's letter to the Philippians urges Christians to pray in the face of worry. For God finds a way through

in the most unlikely ways – as scripture's mention of the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone reminds us.

Catherine Pepinster is a former editor of *The Tablet* and the author of *The Keys and the Kingdom: the British and the papacy from John Paul II to Francis*, published by T&T Clark.

Dearest Lord, be the foundation and cornerstone of my life, the one to whom I turn at every moment of every day. 🕊 Amen.

## Cornerstones

by Martin Delaney

One of my best friends is an atheist. He tends to get quite upset by organised religion and we share very different views. However, by the grace of God, he is a truly valued friend. We debate subjects of faith with respect and, miraculously, he is not without spirituality. I honestly can't imagine my life without Simon. In fact, without my friend's help, my wife and I would have not visited Rome when we did, which in turn sparked our return to faith. Though we are unlikely friends in some ways, Simon has become a rock in my life, a cornerstone really, for my own happiness.

In these trying times of political unrest and polarised views, it can be easier than ever to reject those we find hard to love or like. According to Jesus, the Lord's work is in

allowing those particular people to not only become important in our lives, but also to become vital in some way: indispensable.

Martin Delaney is an actor, writer and personal development coach. He is best known for his work in Oscar-winning *Zero Dark Thirty*, *Now You See Me 2* and George Clooney's *Catch 22*.

“The cornerstone of the Church is the Lord standing before the Father who intercedes for us, who prays for us: we pray to him, but the foundation is him who prays for us.”

Pope Francis

Today:  
Isaiah 5:1-7  
Philippians 4:6-9  
Matthew 21:33-43

Monday:  
Galatians 1:6-12  
Luke 10:25-37

Tuesday:  
Galatians 1:13-24  
Luke 10:38-42

Wednesday:  
Galatians 2:1-2, 7-14  
Luke 11:1-4

Thursday:  
Galatians 3:1-5  
Luke 11:5-13

Friday:  
Galatians 3:7-14  
Luke 11:15-26

Saturday:  
Galatians 3:22-29  
Luke 11:27-28

Next Sunday:  
Isaiah 25:6-10  
Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20  
Matthew 22:1-14