

SUNDAY PLUS

Come together: be one

A Year of the Word

Jesus in our midst



by Sally McAllister

Gen Verde is an international performing arts group, a branch of the Focolare Movement. We use music, dance and drama to carry the Gospel message to young people.

Scheduled to present our workshop programme in a school in Germany, we faced young people

sitting with their backs to the stage. This gives an idea of the least of the challenges we faced – along with low self-esteem, lack of motivation (pupils and teachers) and the fact that a number of them were high as a kite on drugs (in school!). The teachers made it quite clear how sceptical they were about what we were proposing – they said we were dreamers and nothing good could come from these kids. How sad!

On the last day of the workshop, a teacher told me that he had been teaching for 25 years and maybe he now needed to take a fresh look at his attitudes!

The kids' feedback was powerful. God's grace was so tangibly at work. You can imagine how moved I was when we were leaving and three big lads aged about 16 or 17 approached me. They said, "Please accept this contribution from the

three of us – and never give up working with poor kids. We know what this has meant to us, and we want others to have the same experience." Into my hand they pressed three very scrunched-up banknotes adding up to €25.

I don't think we will ever receive sponsorship for our work which will mean more to us than those €25.

Sally McAllister is the Tour Director of Gen Verde, www.genverde.it

In unexpected places

by James Gallogly

My dad's tales of meetings of his St Vincent de Paul group (SVP) were never like this. Amidst the clatter of pool balls, the banging, the crashing, the voices at assorted decibels and competing sound systems, our Confraternity meets within prison walls!

The formality of the meeting would surprise Dad. However, the opening prayers and spiritual reflection set the tone. The focus is on "cases" and the good works that the Conference inspires. This leads quite naturally to requests for prayer: all present can testify to their personal need and that of their fellow inmates.

Our meeting is an uplifting gathering, a real example of rehabilitative culture in action. There is no need to "go and point out the fault": this is a given, part of the membership criteria. Moving beyond this is the challenge that our members face. Our little Confraternity is like a small boat on a big sea. Amidst big challenges and potential dangers, it is a safe space. Best of all, he is among us.

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

"Wherever we go, even to the smallest parish in the most remote corner of this earth, there is the one Church. We are at home; we are in the family; we are among brothers and sisters. And this is a great gift of God!"

Pope Francis

Loving Lord, sometimes it's hard to see "brothers and sisters" in the people around me. Open my eyes and my heart to recognise the beautiful treasures that you placed in their hearts. 🙏 Amen.

Settle the differences

by Catherine Pepinster

Watching a football match is to watch human beings at their best: working together in common purpose, with each individual focused on the common interests of the team. It is a lesson in mutuality. St Paul in his Epistle to the Romans urges people to consider how important mutuality is: avoid debt, he says, except the debt of mutual love. But coming together as one is

hard even for a football team: members can start thinking of their own starring role, rather than the team. They can fail to respect their competitors. As Christians, we, like the players, need to work together, but Christ knew that our flawed human natures make this difficult. That sense of mutuality, though, reaches even into disagreements. The way forward, says Jesus, is to have it out with one another. In that way, we are responsible for our neighbour. And where we are one, there is God.

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.

Dear Parishioner,

It is with much delight that we can return to the public celebration of Holy Mass. A warm welcome back! We have all lived in the wilderness for too long, some of us ending up feeling lonely and afraid.

We can now enjoy a long-awaited return to the community celebration of our faith, to togetherness, to being nourished and fed by the Bread of Life.

Let us give thanks for all that we have received, all that has been taken away, and all that has been left behind. It is our intention to repeat this message in our Newsletters to remind us to reflect on the past and rejoice in the present as we reunite around the altar to receive, once more, the Eucharist.

Today:
Ezekiel 33:7-9
Romans 13:8-10
Matthew 18:15-20

Monday:
1 Corinthians 5:1-8
Luke 6:6-11

Tuesday:
Micah 5:1-4
or Romans 8:28-30
Matthew 1:1-16. 18-23

Wednesday:
1 Corinthians
7:25-31
Luke 6:20-26

Thursday:
1 Corinthians
8:1-7. 11-13
Luke 6:27-38

Friday:
1 Corinthians
9:16-19. 22-27
Luke 6:39-42

Saturday:
1 Corinthians
10:14-22
Luke 6:43-49

Next Sunday:
Ecclesiasticus 27:30 – 28:7
Romans 14:7-9
Matthew 18:21-35