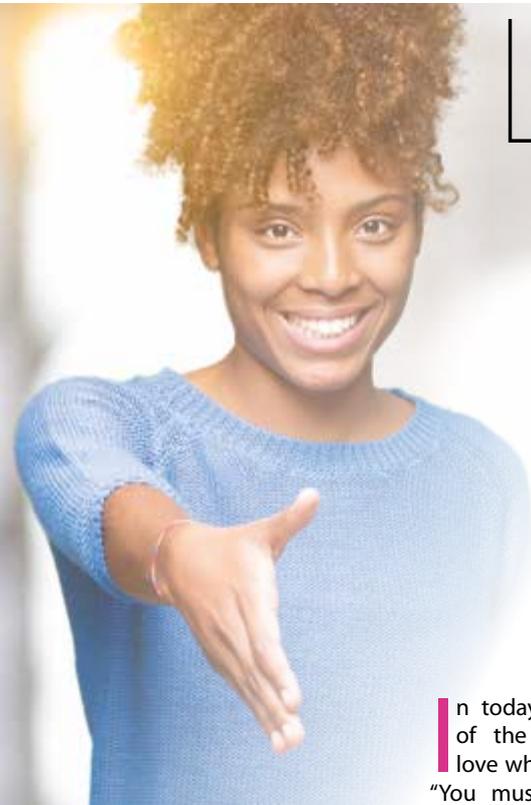


SUNDAY PLUS

And yet more love

A Year of the Word



Love all around

by Fr Denis
McBride C.Ss.R.

In today's Gospel Jesus speaks of the conquering power of love when he tells his followers, "You must love your neighbour

as yourself." Just as the Israelites were asked to love the stranger as themselves, so Christians are also asked to love their neighbours. The ultimate offer of hospitality is the offer of love. Often the real stranger is not the person we don't know but the person we don't want to know, the person we refuse to love. That person could be a neighbour or a member of our own family. We can all have strangers in our own house, still waiting to be welcomed and loved.

We are often scared to take people in because we are afraid of being taken in ourselves. We don't want to be duped, taken for a ride. Hospitality, like everything else, has a price. Jesus knew that when he opened up his heart to receive people: after a while the

reception room begins to look like an emergency ward. People make demands on you; they bleed you. But remaining secure behind our locked doors has its own penalty: people die from being unvisited; people die behind locked doors and locked hearts, from caring only for themselves.

We all need strangers and neighbours to test the quality of our mercy. When we respond, we have the assurance that we minister to Christ: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Christ still comes to us not only in the forms of bread and wine but also in the form of the stranger seeking welcome. That is Gospel.

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

Don't be afraid to love

by Malcolm Mann

"Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?" Jesus' answer to this question defines our faith. But what does it mean to love God, and our neighbour as ourselves?

In the first reading, God commands Israel through Moses to take care of those on the margins of society: the stranger, widow and orphan, the poor and destitute.

To love God, therefore, is to love as he loves. That's a scary thought because it will mean leaving our comfort zone. But we should be encouraged, for our journey will only take us more deeply into the life of Christ.

A consequence of that journey will be that we cease to look at

ourselves as apart from Christ but in him. This in turn will allow us to love our neighbour as ourselves, so becoming, a "great example" of the faith, like the Thessalonian church in the second reading.

Malcolm Mann is Secretary of The Keys, the Catholic Writers Guild of England and Wales.

"Far from being reduced to sentimentalism, tenderness is the first step in overcoming the withdrawal into oneself, to emerge from the self-centeredness that ruins human freedom. God's tenderness leads us to understand that love is the meaning of life."

Pope Francis

Love until it hurts

by Mary Bell

At the Central African mission the sisters looked despairingly at the long line of starving people standing patiently outside the compound gates and then at the single pot of porridge they had to feed them all. There was obviously not enough. Many had walked miles in the heat, across land despoiled by war and drought: they were desperate and the mission their last hope.

One of the sisters recalls that they could always tell by looking in their eyes who was likely to survive the day and who would die. The hardest thing she had to do in her life was to refuse food to a dying person because they had to feed those most likely to live.

However, the people who received their small bowls of porridge shared what they had with those who had been refused. There is no greater love than to share the little one has with those who have nothing.

Mary Bell is a retired teacher, U3A lecturer and devoted grandmother.

Dearest Lord, teach me to love you as you deserve: with my whole self and with every breath that I breathe. 🙏 Amen.

Today:
Exodus 22:20-26
1 Thessalonians 1:5-10
Matthew 22:34-40

Monday:
Ephesians 4:32 – 5:8
Luke 13:10-17

Tuesday:
Ephesians 5:21-33
Luke 13:18-21

Wednesday:
Ephesians 2:19-22
Luke 6:12-19

Thursday:
Ephesians 6:10-20
Luke 13:31-35

Friday:
Philippians 1:1-11
Luke 14:1-6

Saturday:
Philippians 1:18-26
Luke 14:1. 7-11

Next Sunday:
Apocalypse 7:2-4. 9-14
1 John 3:1-3
Matthew 5:1-12