

SUNDAY PLUS

Count your blessings

A Year of the Word

Take time to reflect

by Fr Denis
McBride C.Ss.R.

Dear friends, as we approach the end of the liturgical year, the coming season of Advent resets the clocks and calendars of Christian worship. Time moves on; perhaps this might be a good moment to pause, to look back and to look forward – to look back at a year that is closing and look ahead to the year that is beginning.

When you pause and look back at this year, do you think you are a better person? How have you grown this year? What good things have happened to you? What bad experiences have you endured? Have you lost anyone close to you this year? Has anyone close to you died, or has someone you loved moved away, out of your life? Is there a new absence in your life?

Have you made new friends? Has it been a good year for your family? Have you stayed close to them?

Do they know you love them? Do you feel better about yourself now than you did last year? Are you still excited about your vocation, your career, your work? Or are you content in retirement?

And when you look ahead, how do you feel? What are looking forward to?

Dear friends, we are a community of memory that looks back; we are

a community of Spirit that looks forward. It's important, though not easy, to look back with kindness and to look forward in hope. Let us hand over the past to God for his healing blessing. Let us ask the Lord to face the future with us, because we do not want to face it alone.

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



Small blessings

by Gráinne Treanor

My life as a mother of three can be hectic. School, sport, music, work and home life move quickly. It is easy to get caught up in the rush of morning alarms, school buses, laundry, meals, training schedules, voluntary roles and more.

Times may have changed since the description of "the capable wife" we hear about in today's reading from Proverbs, but mothers and fathers today are often riddled with doubt about their ability to "do enough" for their children.

When all is said and done, however, it is not the possessions or victories that matter. It is the quiet moments together, the stories told at bedtime, the tears

wiped away – the small blessings – that make life precious. My children often thank me, but the most precious thank you of all has been the handwritten note that said, "To Mam. Thank you for making me exist." A not-so-small blessing?

Gráinne Treanor is a mother of three and professional editor/proofreader who works from her home in the west of Ireland.

Lord, our world is often split between the "haves" and "have nots". Some people face difficulties which I would find impossible to handle. Lord, open my eyes to their needs and teach me to be compassionate and generous. 🕊 Amen.

Count my blessings

by Phil Ferguson

I was eight years old and, for some now long-forgotten reason, the most miserable, underprivileged, neglected individual in the entire human race. Determined to prove that I had nothing and was going nowhere, I started my list of assets, beginning with clothes and pencils – and continued for a surprising distance. Before long, I'd discovered that I was

much better off than I had realised. Not only that: I no longer felt grumpy and the weight of the world had vanished from my young shoulders.

St Teresa of Calcutta commented, "When a poor person dies of hunger, it has not happened because God did not take care of him or her. It has happened because neither you nor I wanted to give that person what he or she needed."

Today is the World Day of the Poor. Perhaps I could count my blessings and think of those people who have a shorter list. Is there something I can do to help them?

Phil Ferguson is a former teacher.

"The boat of our life is often storm-tossed and buffeted by winds. Even when the waters are calm, they quickly grow agitated. When we are caught up in those storms, they seem to be our only problem. But the issue is not the momentary storm, but how we are navigating through life. The secret of navigating well is to invite Jesus on board."

Pope Francis

Today:
Proverbs 31:10-13. 19-20. 30-31
1 Thessalonians 5:1-6
Matthew 25:14-30

Monday:
Apocalypse
1:1-4; 2:1-5
Luke 18:35-43

Monday (S): St Margaret (Feast):
Proverbs 31:10-13. 19-20.
30-31 or 1 Corinthians 12:31 –
13:13; Matthew 25:31-46

Tuesday:
Apocalypse
3:1-6. 14-22
Luke 19:1-10

Wednesday:
Apocalypse
4:1-11
Luke 19:11-28

Thursday:
Apocalypse
5:1-10
Luke 19:41-44

Friday:
Apocalypse
10:8-11
Luke 19:45-48

Saturday:
Apocalypse
11:4-12
Luke 20:27-40

Next Sunday:
Ezekiel 34:11-12. 15-17
1 Corinthians 15:20-26. 28
Matthew 25:31-46