

# SUNDAY PLUS

Start at home

A Year of the Word

## Voices crying in the wilderness



by Siân Owen-Owen

It's Advent. We'll hear yet again that John the Baptist was "a voice crying in the wilderness", just as we did last year and the year before and the year before that. But has he become, in our own hearts, "a voice crying in the wilderness", a

part of our Christmas preparations but otherwise passing by unseen and unheard?

Might it be that, in our daily lives, there are other voices trying their utmost to be heard but are overlooked because we don't realise their urgency? We see people begging on our streets and some are frauds, but I can never

forget a man who went down on his knees to say thank you for a bread roll and the woman whose eyes filled with tears as she declared, "I am so hungry" – and I had nothing to give her. There was the young man who, rolling up his sleeping bag, said, "Did you know that you are the only person who says 'good morning' to me?" Is it so easy to accidentally overlook the tears in the wilderness of the people who are really in need?

What about the grumpy old

man, twice a widower and whose son committed suicide on hearing that he had cancer? Do we hear the complaints or see the bitterly weeping heart?

Do we notice the struggling mother of small children who discovers that she is pregnant again and can't afford to buy an essential item of her son's school uniform?

This Advent, how many voices can we hear which are crying in today's wilderness? Can we respond?

Siân Owen-Owen is a Catholic freelance writer and a former nurse and midwife.

## How?

by Br Royston Price C.Ss.R.

We can sense a great joy running through the readings today, with John the Baptist's declaration about Jesus bursting out of the page! Our joy as Christians comes not from some unstable ground of good health or prosperity, but from Christ dwelling in our heart. Our Lord's there, but it's up to us what sort of home he's given. Is it the make-do stable at Bethlehem, or the loving household at Nazareth? Amongst all the busyness of our celebrations, or fretting about last-minute presents, we can use these final days of Advent to prepare ourselves to welcome afresh the Christ child at Christmas, to make sure there's room for him at the inn. The joy when we do is far better

than the latest gadget or the most fashionable clothes: their attraction inevitably fades, but the joy of having Christ in our heart and our life is one that lasts forever.

Br Royston Price is the Vocation Director for the Redemptorist London Province.

**Lord of life, deserts are lonely places where it is easy to get lost. Help me to look out for others and to help them on their journey towards you. ☩ Amen.**

## It takes courage

by Mary Bell

The very nature of life involves change: just growing older is not an option; we may have to come to terms with physical deficiencies and adjust to social scenarios we do not like. Every passing month brings us closer to our final encounter with our saviour. This can be daunting. Yet it is also a challenge. What have we done in our lives? Not much? Well, now is the opportunity to shake ourselves up. Advent reminds us that there can be a new beginning. Now is the time to be courageous and face up to whatever confronts us: helping those not so fortunate in health or wealth, trying to overcome our shortcomings, repairing bridges where relationships have faltered, making friends with those we would rather avoid. It is time to

emerge from our comfort zones and examine our lives. It all takes a will to change and a very special kind of courage.

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

**"God calls everywhere, God does not have preferences for certain people, he calls everyone. Be courageous!"**

Pope Francis

**Today:**  
Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
John 1:6-8, 19-28

**Monday:**  
Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17  
Matthew 21:23-27

**Tuesday:**  
Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13  
Matthew 21:28-32

**Wednesday:**  
Isaiah 45:6-8, 18, 21-25  
Luke 7:18-23

**Thursday:**  
Genesis 49:2, 8-10  
Matthew 1:1-17

**Friday:**  
Jeremiah 23:5-8  
Matthew 1:18-24

**Saturday:**  
Judges 13:2-7, 24-25  
Luke 1:5-25

**Next Sunday:**  
2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16  
Romans 16:25-27  
Luke 1:26-38