

SUNDAY PLUS

Limitless generosity

A voice like thunder

by Eldred Willey

It was Wednesday 1 July 1981. Fr Jozo Zovko, the parish priest of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, was praying in the village church. A week earlier, while he was away conducting a retreat, some children from his parish had claimed to see an apparition of the Virgin Mary on the hill above the village. "We don't need signs and wonders to have faith," he had said. Now the crowds were on the

hill and he was in the church – alone and in anguish. "I cried out from the depths of my despair and helplessness," he said, "and God answered. I heard a voice – not an inner voice, but a voice like mine, a voice that rang all over my life: 'Go and protect the children.'" Going to the church door, he found the young visionaries outside. They had just fled across the vineyards from the police.

Was it like that for Jeremiah when he heard a voice which rang all over his life? As for Jeremiah, so for Fr



Jozo, obeying the voice would mean beating and incarceration. Having offered up prayer and entreaty with loud cries he would have to learn obedience through his suffering. In October he was

sentenced to three years in prison. Yet after sharing in the sufferings of Christ, he would also experience the power of his resurrection.

Eldred Willey works in communications for the Diocese of East Anglia.

Clap for the NHS – and others

by Natasha Pritchard

"If anyone serves me, my father will honour him."

To serve others is to serve God. During the pandemic, the whole nation came together to honour those who were serving in our hospitals, care homes and communities. Neighbours, who might never have spoken together before, smiled and waved to each other on their doorsteps every Thursday night. People posted notes through strangers' doors, offering assistance. Community spirits were restored as we joined together for a common purpose. At a time when we were forced apart, we came together more than ever

before. Our streets were alive with gratitude and hope.

Following in Jesus' humble footsteps, ordinary workers in our society accepted the very real risk of death, giving of themselves to serve others despite the danger. These were our modern-day acts of selfless and sacrificial love. The love that God generously wrote on our hearts spilled out onto neighbour and stranger alike.

Natasha Pritchard, a lay Catholic chaplain in a Liverpool hospital, worked to support patients, families, carers and all who needed support during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Loving Lord, why do I sometimes avoid praising someone for a job well done? Help me to unselfishly recognise the talents and achievements of the people around me.  Amen.

Without counting the cost

by James Gallogly

For ten consecutive Thursday evenings during the spring of 2020 we gathered on our doorsteps to clap the carers. In a time of national trauma, this assembly brought joy and happiness. The creative cacophony of noise, even fireworks for some, lifted the nation. For many it was the highlight of the restricted, locked-down week. This socially distanced get-together brought cheer and bolstered morale. How marvellous to see communities that once were too busy to notice each other, now staunch allies in fight against Covid-19.

Some of our national reticence and social isolationism died in those weeks. For a brief moment walls between age and class and

race appeared to tumble. We recognised our common humanity. Like the "wheat grain that falls on the ground and dies" the result was a rich harvest. As we look back we can see what love without counting the cost looks like.

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

"Dialogue must not only favour the preferential option on behalf of the poor, the marginalised and the excluded, but also respect them as having a leading role to play."

Pope Francis

Today:
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Hebrews 5:7-9
John 12:20-33

Monday:
Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17.
19-30, 33-62
John 8:1-11

Tuesday:
Numbers 21:4-9
John 8:21-30

Wednesday:
Daniel 3:14-20, 24-25, 28
John 8:31-42

Thursday:
Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10
Hebrews 10:4-10
Luke 1:26-38

Friday:
Jeremiah 20:10-13
John 10:31-42

Saturday:
Ezekiel 37:21-28
John 11:45-56

Next Sunday:
Procession: Mark 11:1-10
or John 12:12-16
Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7
Philippians 2:6-11
Mark 14:1 – 15:47