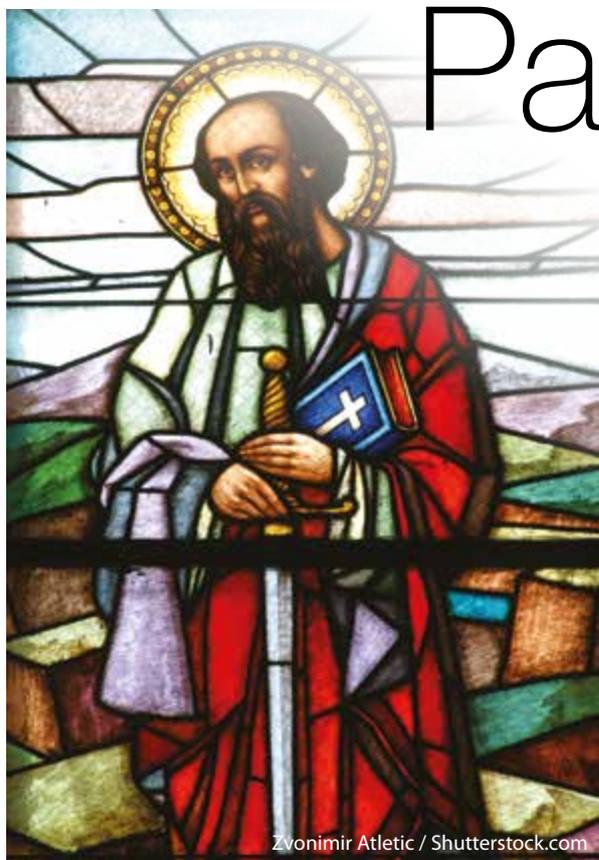


SUNDAY PLUS

Home sweet home



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Paul the apostle

by Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

Paul escapes to Jerusalem where he tries to join the disciples, but he is in for a rude awakening. The disciples are all afraid of Paul; they simply cannot believe that he has really changed. Given Paul's punishing track record, the disciples' suspicion seems all too reasonable. By his own admission, Paul had signed the death warrants of Jerusalem Christians; now he seems to expect ready admission into their inner circle.

We are not told if the apostles are impressed: only that Paul begins preaching in the city. He does the same favour for Jerusalem that he did for Damascus – he causes a riot and turns his hearers into willing assassins. Another deadly response, another security operation, another emergency exit. And when he is gone, Luke tells us, the churches in the region are now left in peace. With the dynamite shipped

back north, the churches can breathe easily again.

That need to overcome any suspicions about his authenticity makes Paul an energetic preacher, a tireless traveller, a fierce debater. He is a great example of authentic humanity: he is sensitive, impulsive, obstinate, moody, thoughtful, demanding, driven, caring. His idealism is tempered by his sense of realism and his own struggle always serves to educate his spirituality.

The poet Robert Frost could have been speaking about Paul when he wrote:

*And were an epitaph to be my story
I'd have a short one ready for my own.
I would have written of me on my stone:
I had a lover's quarrel with the world.*

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

Home is where the heart is

by Emerald O'Hanrahan

Home is where the heart is.

It took me a long time to feel secure and "at home". I've struggled a lot with anxiety – still struggle, really.

When I was a teenager, I went through a period of not really having a home, but flitting between several different friends' and relatives' homes. I was always carrying four plastic bags of stuff, trying to work out where I could stay next.

Now, I'm incredibly blessed. My husband and I live in a beautiful home, safe and secure. But really, I always had family and friends I could stay with. I was never going

to be properly homeless – but I still couldn't feel safe or secure. My "home" within me was missing while I was separating myself from God. Through coming home to my faith, meditation and prayer, I was able to finally rest in myself, in God within me, and to recognise that as God had made a home in me, I was home.

Emerald O'Hanrahan is best-known for playing Emma Grundy in the BBC series *The Archers*.

Lord of life, lead us to an ever greater love and respect for all that you have created. ☩ Amen.

Remembering lockdown

by Michael George

A privilege of working as a teacher during the Covid-19 lockdown was being invited into students' homes through the virtual means of online teaching. It was a new experience for teachers and students alike; it took a little getting used to but soon became almost second-nature.

It was a privilege to be invited into a family's private and personal space – a dwelling place where, I pray, the children felt that they belonged, and felt loved, safe, secure and happy. For forty-five minutes at a time, families trusted me to enter that sense of home they had established.

By inviting, "Make your home

in me," Jesus invites an encounter with a real presence, not a virtual one. He invites each of us to make our home within him, and find within him belonging, love, safety, security and happiness – and not for a time-limited period like forty-five minutes, but for all eternity.

After many years as a teacher, Michael George now works as a lay school chaplain.

"Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. As Christians inspired by this certainty, we wish to commit ourselves to the conscious and responsible care of our common home."

Pope Francis

Today: Acts 9:26-31
1 John 3:18-24
John 15:1-8

Monday: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
John 14:6-14

Tuesday: Acts 14:19-28
John 14:27-31

Wednesday: Acts 15:1-6
John 15:1-8

Thursday: Acts 15:7-21
John 15:9-11

Friday: Acts 15:22-31
John 15:12-17

Saturday: Acts 16:1-10
John 15:18-21

Next Sunday: Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48
1 John 4:7-10
John 15:9-17