

SUNDAY PLUS



We are never alone

A Year of the Word

Hope needs help

by Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

Hope is the virtue that enables us to look to the future with real confidence. It is not wishful thinking. We can all pass the time daydreaming, imagining a future that has nothing to do with reality. Wishful thinking has no bounds; it admits of no limitation; it is not criticised by what is actually possible. I can ask you to imagine a tartan elephant with six legs doing a highland fling. You can imagine that, but it would be foolish to hope to see it. As the Jewish writer Martin Buber observed: "hope imagines the real". That is the difference between hope and wishful thinking.

Hope is not limitless: it is limited by real possibility. Hope needs help if it is going to go beyond the expression of desire. If you hope for peace,

for example, your hope needs all the help it can get if it is to be more than a cherished wish. Without help, hope remains an orphan – abandoned in the nursery of the mind.

Jesus has no intention of leaving his disciples behind him in a situation where they are left to hope without any help. Jesus promises his followers the Spirit, the Advocate, who will be with them.

The power of the Spirit is the help of Christian hope. Without the Spirit, the followers of Jesus would be thrown back on their own resources, which are clearly inadequate when the going gets rough. The time of Jesus' passion proved that. With the help of the Spirit, however, the disciples can face the future with a power that is much larger than themselves. That power is the Spirit: the reality of the Spirit is the ground of their hope.

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

Born to live

by Dr Lawrence Osborn

Philip preached the gospel in Samaria and the people welcomed his message enthusiastically. But something was missing. When Peter and John arrive, they identify the problem. These people may have responded positively and have been baptised, but they have not yet received the Holy Spirit. So the apostles pray for the gift of the Spirit.

It was an exceptional situation: Philip had dared to preach the Gospel to the hated Samaritans. Perhaps this delay in receiving the Holy Spirit was really to convince the apostles that outsiders could also share in God's grace. Whatever the reason, it highlights the importance of the Spirit in the life of believers.

In today's Gospel, Jesus promises us another Paraclete (advocate, counsellor, comforter) – one like himself who will be with us for ever, the Spirit of truth. The point is that God wants more for us than bare existence. God wants us to share in his triune life.

Dr Lawrence Osborn is an Orthodox layman living in Glasgow.

"By means of our universal Brother – Jesus – we can relate to one another in a new way; no longer as orphans, but rather as children of the same good and merciful Father. And this changes everything! We can see each other as brothers and sisters".

Pope Francis

Wait in hope

by Eileen Cole

"Always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have. But give it with courtesy and respect."

We often know what and why we believe yet feel incapable of explaining it to others. Why is this? Are we waiting for someone to tell us how we should do it or what to say? We all need to educate ourselves about our faith: there are so many good resources to watch, read and hear. Let's be proactive about informing ourselves and forming ourselves through study courses, recollections, retreats and reading. When we find something helpful, let's be generous in sharing it with others. Conversely, when we find something harmful, we

may be able to add clarification or correction, taking care not to be an echo or loudspeaker for evil or gossip, which can destroy hope.

Eileen Cole is a Media Officer with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

Loving Lord, bless all families. Fill them with love for you and for each other in life's daily ups and downs. Let them find lifelong encouragement and support whether they are together or apart. In particular, Lord, bless my own family with health, happiness and safety in all their undertakings. Amen.

Today:
Acts 8:5-8, 14-17
1 Peter 3:15-18
John 14:15-21

Monday:
Acts 16:11-15
John 15:26 – 16:4

Tuesday:
Acts 16:22-34
John 16:5-11

Wednesday:
Acts 17:15, 22 – 18:1
John 16:12-15

Thursday:
Acts 1:1-11
Ephesians 1:17-23
Matthew 28:16-20

Friday:
Acts 18:9-18
John 16:20-23

Saturday:
Acts 18:23-28
John 16:23-28

Next Sunday:
Acts 1:12-14
1 Peter 4:13-16
John 17:1-11