

# SUNDAY PLUS

Love without borders

## Love without limits

by Eldred Willey

Could anyone honestly believe the story in today's readings? A man facing up to the imminence of his own murder shares his testament. In it he speaks of the joy which he wants to pass

on to those closest to him, as he looks beyond his death to a scorned people of another race and religion, who will receive the gift of the Spirit as a fruit of the passion. He manages to unite his inner circle – for so long wavering and divided – so that all but one will lay down their lives, meeting a violent end as he has freely chosen

to do. Really? Does such a tale belong to the world of hard-nosed journalism and verifiable reports?

In June 1996, from the jumble of faxes and press releases crossing the desks of newspaper editors, a leaf of paper fell out – the testament of Christian de Chergé, of whose story the paragraph above is an

exact summary. He had just met martyrdom along with six of his fellow Trappist monks. Under his leadership they had voted unanimously to remain in the Atlas Mountains and in the Father's love, and to lay down their lives for their scorned Algerian friends – those Muslims whom Christian, if God willed, would see "filled with the gift of the Spirit". Even in the face of his murderer he saw that of the God to whom he wished to commend him. "And may we find each other," he wrote, "happy good thieves in Paradise, if it pleases God, the Father of us both."

Eldred Willey works in Communications for the diocese of East Anglia.



## Open for business

by Emerald O'Hanrahan

I find it really hard to stay open in my heart and live in a heart-centred way. I know this is what being a disciple of Jesus requires and yet I struggle with keeping my heart "open for business". There's so much suffering, so much need, that I get overwhelmed and quickly close down. It's something I'm pretty ashamed of. So my challenge is remaining in Jesus' love – I guess that's a challenge we all share. To be a disciple of Jesus asks a lot of us, but the gift we receive is that of being fully alive: able to be really present with other people, not offering advice or trying to fix their problems, but just being with them in their suffering, not turning

away because it's too much for us. Then we find another gift – we no longer need to reject ourselves. I can really understand I'm God's child, and like every other person on the planet, cannot be outside his love.

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

**"The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. It becomes almost impossible to accept the limits imposed by reality."**

Pope Francis

## Pandemic lessons

by Michael George

At the start of the Covid-19 lockdown I had some extra time on my hands. I committed to using the time to read more, run more and practise the piano more.

Some weeks into the restrictions I discussed coping with lockdown with some senior school students. I shared with them how I had been using my time and in doing so came to the realisation that – individually worthy though each of the activities was –

**"I should like, when the time comes, to have a moment of spiritual clarity which would allow me to beg forgiveness of God and of my fellow human beings and, at the same time, forgive with all my heart the one who would strike me down."**

From the Testament of Dom Christian de Chergé

none of them was about deepening my relationship with God, or my relationships with others. As so often in the past, working with children and young adults opened my eyes.

Today's Gospel is a reminder that faith is lived out through relationships – "Love one another". When we are unselfish, look out for others and love one another, relationships are stronger, with each other and with God. We're closer to God when we're closer to one another.

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

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

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 or 4:1-13  
Mark 16:15-20

Friday:  
Acts 1:15-17, 20-26  
John 15:9-17

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

Next Sunday:  
Acts 1:15-17, 20-26  
1 John 4:11-16  
John 17:11-19