

SUNDAY PLUS

Reasons to rejoice

Homecoming

By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

People with Alzheimer's can find it hard to recognise people, names and places. This is difficult for both the individual and their family. Yet, sometimes, all that is needed is the creation of a tangible link with days gone by. The present might be a challenge, but the past is there forever – even if sometimes muddled – and it can often be easy to rekindle the spark.

A visitor described to a carer some of Ann's amazing work as a chaplain in a high security prison. Ann was listening,

As if someone had flicked a switch, for a while, she was her old self, speaking about the inmates to whom she had given so much love. For a few precious moments, Ann was not lost. She was found and had come home to those who loved her.

Neither was Ann lost whenever she attended Mass, especially when she received Holy Communion. Until her death, once in the chapel, she knew where she was and why she was there.

The Gospel of the Prodigal Son focuses on three individuals: two sons and their father. We can think of examples of a forgiving, welcoming

father who could uncomplainingly accept back a wayward son and tactfully deal with a jealous grumbler.

There are, however, various ways of being "lost" and "found". Loving someone with Alzheimer's can bring the joy of recognition and encounter with a precious individual, as they are and as they were. Regardless of the present, there is always a beautiful person who, for a moment, can still come home. It's a genuine moment of rejoicing.

Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.

"[The Prodigal Son]... finds himself still dirty, yet dressed for a banquet. For his father does not say: 'Go and have a shower and then come here'. No. He is dirty and dressed for a banquet. He fingers the ring he has been given, which is just like his father's. He has new sandals on his feet. He is in the middle of a party, in the midst of a crowd of people."

Pope Francis

Not lost but found

By Brian Fahy

Dennis Taylor, the snooker player, lost his mother to a sudden and unexpected death in 1985, just as he was about to take part in the World Snooker Championship. "Losing my mother changed me completely", he said. "After losing her I felt I would never fear anything else again. Whatever happened in my life, nothing would cause me to worry ever again."

He gave proof of his calmness and new-found spirit when, after going 8-0 down to Steve Davis, he came back to win a momentous final, 18-17, on the final black.

The Prodigal Son knows all about loss. He squandered so much. He made such a mess – but something told him to go home. He thought himself lost, but his father celebrated him as found. He woke up to how rich he really was.

His older brother had not lost anything, but he hadn't yet found what he was looking for.

Brian Fahy describes himself as an "apprentice poet". His website is to be found at www.errispoetry.com.

Feast of the week
Tuesday 29 March


Ss Gwladys
(d. 500/523) and
Gwynllyw (d. 529)

St Gwladys ferch Brychan, to give her full Welsh name, was an early fifth century Welsh saint. According to some traditions, her father, King Brychan, refused to allow the warrior, King Gwynllyw Milwr to marry his daughter and so Gwynllyw and three hundred soldiers abducted Gwladys. Brychan gave chase and a pitched battle between the two kings was only stopped by

the intervention of a third: King Arthur.

Notorious for his cattle raids and violence, Gwynllyw eventually became a Christian as a result of the example and influence of Gwladys and their son, Cadoc the Wise. He abdicated his throne, founded a monastery and became a hermit. Gwladys joined him for a while in a life of prayer and fasting until she moved away and herself founded a monastery.

Ss Gwynllyw and Gwladys happily left behind their active, political lives as husband and wife in favour of a life of prayer. God was more important than their crowns.

Lord of life and love, watch over, protect and bless everyone who, in whatever way, is lost. Be with their loved ones, their carers and all those who long for the lost one to come home.  Amen.

Today:
Joshua 5:9-12
2 Corinthians 5:17-21
Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Monday:
Isaiah 65:17-21
John 4:43-54

Tuesday:
Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12
John 5:1-3, 5-16

Wednesday:
Isaiah 49:8-15
John 5:17-30

Thursday:
Exodus 32:7-14
Luke 5:31-47

Friday:
Wisdom 2:1, 12-22
John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Saturday:
Jeremiah 11:18-20
John 7:40-52

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 43:16-21
Philippians 3:8-14
John 8:1-11