

SUNDAY PLUS

Think for yourself

No one deserves mercy



"I know he doesn't deserve mercy," the mother answered. "It wouldn't be mercy if he deserved it."

That is the point about mercy: nobody deserves it. Everyone deserves true justice; mercy, on the other hand, is sheer gift. Mercy cancels out wrongs and transgressions – not because a sparkling defence has been found, but because that is the free response of the person who is grieved. Mercy does not suggest that the guilty are not guilty; it recognises the guilt but does not demand satisfaction for the wrong.

You see that beautifully illustrated in the Gospel where Jesus shows mercy to the woman caught in adultery. The challenge of the Gospel is whether we can see ourselves, not as the woman who is caught in adultery, but as the man who is caught up in forgiveness. Can we forgive as readily as Jesus forgives? Or do we dote on people's wrongdoing, reminding them of past failures and lighting vigil lamps to their mistakes? Can we show mercy and leave it?

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

By Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

The story is told of a young French soldier who deserted Napoleon's army but who, within a matter of hours, was caught by his own troops. To discourage soldiers from

abandoning their posts the penalty for desertion was death. The young soldier's mother heard what had happened and went to plead with Napoleon to spare the life of her son. Napoleon heard her plea but pointed out that because of the serious nature of the crime her son had committed he clearly did not deserve mercy.

Prayer to communicate by encounter

Lord, teach us to move beyond ourselves, and to set out in search of truth.

Teach us to go out and see, teach us to listen, not to entertain prejudices or draw hasty conclusions.

Teach us to go where no one else will go, to take the time needed to understand, to pay attention to the essentials, not to be distracted by the superfluous, to distinguish deceptive appearances from the truth.

Grant us the grace to recognise your dwelling places in our world and the honesty needed to tell others what we have seen.

Pope Francis, Prayer for World Communications Day 2021

Feast of the week

Monday 4 April

St Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636)

Incredibly, the patron saint of the Internet is someone who died almost 1400 years ago!

St Isidore of Seville was one of four saints in his immediate family – a tough act for the rest of us to follow! Still, however holy, Isidore's brother Leander, insistent that his younger brother would make use of his educational opportunities, bullied him so much that, unable to take any more, Isidore ran away.

Isidore eventually returned home, but Leander, not believing that he wouldn't escape again, imprisoned him in a cell to complete his studies.

Despite the ill-treatment, Isidore developed a great love for learning. He became a priest and a bishop who, remembering his own abuse, insisted on consulting people before making decisions.

Famous for his vast knowledge, Isidore was probably the first person to create an encyclopaedia. He also invented the full stop, comma and colon.

One of his last acts before his death was to give all his possessions to the poor people of Seville.

"In communications, nothing can ever completely replace seeing things in person. Some things can only be learned through first-hand experience. We do not communicate merely with words, but with our eyes, the tone of our voice and our gestures. Jesus' attractiveness to those who met him depended on the truth of his preaching; yet the effectiveness of what he said was inseparable from how he looked at others, from how he acted towards them, and even from his silence."

Pope Francis

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

Monday:
Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62
John 8:12-20

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

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

Thursday:
Genesis 17:3-9
John 8:51-59

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

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

Next Sunday:
Procession: Luke 19:28-40
Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7
Philippians 2:6-11
Luke 22:14 – 23:56