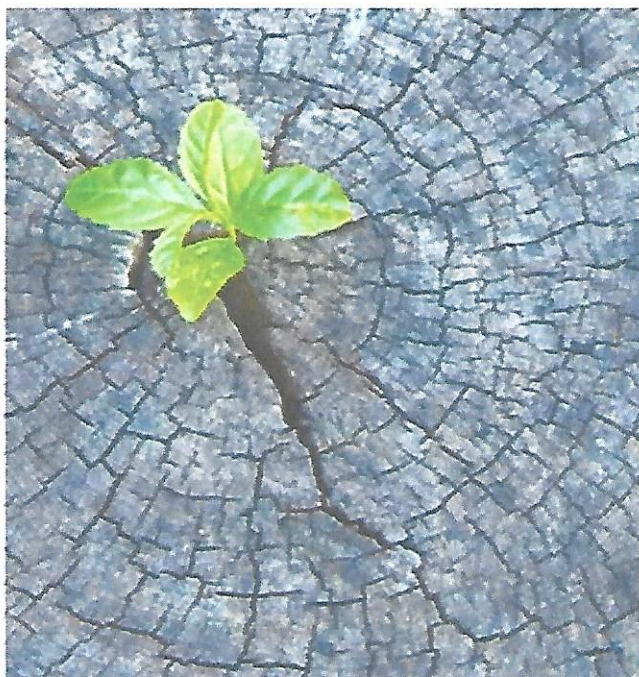


# SUNDAY PLUS

Proclaim the message!

## Death and new birth



By Fr Denis McBride  
C.Ss.R.

**S**tephen, the first martyr, is described as a man full of faith who preaches in the name of Jesus and works wonders among the people. Stephen is brought before the Council where he is charged with claiming that Jesus will destroy the Temple and change the Law. In his own defence he makes a long speech accusing his accusers of resisting the Holy Spirit. When they hear this the Council go into uproar, rush Stephen out of the city and stone him. The final scene is witnessed by Saul: Stephen forgives his executioners before he is killed.

Like Jesus his master, Stephen's final act is not a scream of hate but a word of forgiveness. His last act is a refusal to mirror the hatred he sees in

his executioners. His martyrdom is an appointment not with hate but with forgiveness. And forgiveness turns up to keep the appointment – dead on time.

There is no doubt that the way of Stephen's dying prepared for the conversion of Saul, because the voice of the forgiving Christ echoes in the voice of the dying disciple. But perhaps there is more. We do not know if a shadow came over Saul when he witnessed the killing of Stephen. We do know that he could not deny being closely linked to this anguish. Did Stephen's violent death say anything to the silent watcher? Every killing of another human being is an accusation: in the death of Stephen, was Saul accused of persecuting Christ? In the death of the first martyr, was there the birth of the last apostle?

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications, [www.rpbooks.co.uk](http://www.rpbooks.co.uk).

### True freedom of expression

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;  
Where knowledge is free;  
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;  
Where words come out from the depth of truth;  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;  
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action –  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

*Gitanjali, Rabindranath Tagore*

"We will never discover the special, personal calling that God has in mind for us if we remain enclosed in ourselves, in our usual way of doing things, in the apathy of those who fritter away their lives in their own little world. We would lose the chance to dream big and to play our part in the unique and original story that God wants to write with us."

Pope Francis

Feast of the week  
Tuesday 31 May


### The Visitation

Fresh as a flower at the first ray of dawn,  
She came to her cousin whose morning was gone.  
But there leaped a little child in the ancient womb  
And there leaped a little hope in every ancient tomb.


Hail, little sister, who heralds the spring.  
Hail, brave Mother, who carries the King.  
Hail to the moment beneath your breast.  
May all generations call you blessed.

When you walk in the summer through the heat on the hill,  
When your one with the wind and one with his will – be brave  
With the burdens you are blessed to bear,  
For it's Christ that you carry everywhere, everywhere, everywhere.

*Sr Miriam Therese Winter MMM*

Lord, may the seed of love which you planted within me, produce a beautiful flower which will touch many hearts.  Amen.

Today:  
Acts 7:55-60  
Apocalypse 22:12-14, 16-17, 20  
John 17:20-26

 Acts 1:1-11  
Ephesians 1:17-23  
or Hebrews 9:24-28;  
10:19-23  
Luke 24:46-53

Monday:  
Acts 19:1-8  
John 16:29-33

Tuesday:  
Zephaniah 3:14-18  
or Romans 12:9-16  
Luke 1:39-56

Wednesday:  
Acts 20:28-38  
John 17:11-19

Thursday:  
Acts 22:30; 23:6-11  
John 17:20-26

Friday:  
Acts 25:13-21  
John 21:15-19

Saturday:  
Mass in the Morning  
Acts 28:16-20, 30-31  
John 21:20-25

Next Sunday:  
Mass During the Day:  
Acts 2:1-11  
Romans 8:8-17  
John 14:15-16, 23-26