

SUNDAY PLUS

Saints in unexpected places

Take another look

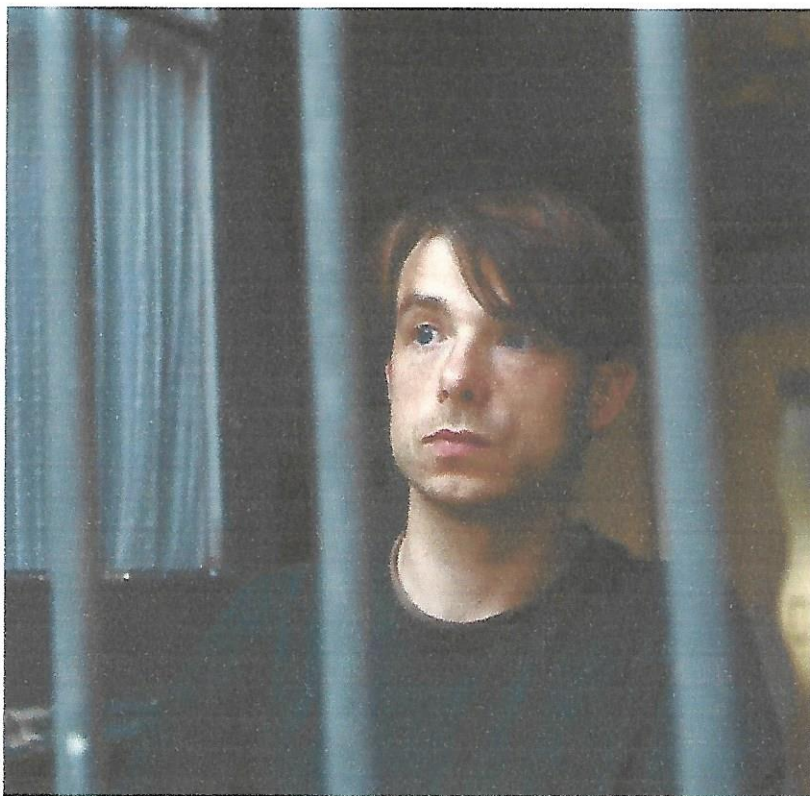
By Gerlinde Symons

A few weeks ago, the regular handful of prisoners who attend my Tuesday afternoon prayer group in the chapel brought along a new member. He was a young man who had never been in prison before and was struggling to cope. That morning he'd got himself into a spot of bother on the wing, so instead of continuing with our prayer time, we listened to him as he shared his story. Two days earlier, he had been persuaded by another prisoner to hide some "hooch" (a home-made alcoholic drink) in his cell. He was feeling anxious about it and when the officers searched his cell, he kicked the container of hooch further under his bed but it tipped over and flooded his cell. He told us how stupid he had felt, but mostly how his pride had been hurt.

I was touched by his honesty and willingness to be vulnerable. One by one, the other prisoners in the prayer group offered him words of comfort and kindness – they'd all made similar mistakes before. By the time the young man left the chapel, the heavy burden with which he'd arrived was lifted, and he was even able to see the funny side of it!

I will never forget what I witnessed that day: a group of seasoned prisoners comforting a young man in need. And just like Jesus in our Gospel reading today, we too are called to bring comfort and healing to those in need around us. In the Gospel, it was the outsider, the Samaritan, who returned to thank Jesus. I'm hoping that my story will challenge the way you look at prisoners – they too are children of God.

Gerlinde Symons is a lay Catholic chaplain in a UK prison.



"Let us pray today for our brothers and sisters who are in prison. They suffer so much because of the uncertainty of what will happen inside the prison and thinking about their families, wondering how they are, if someone is sick, if they lack something."

Pope Francis

Hidden saints

by John Crone

A Catholic magazine once ran a feature on "One Hundred Leading Catholics" in Britain. It was a list of "celebrities". Readers' reaction was mainly critical of the editor's assumption that they would like to be "led" by these people, some

of whose reputations might not be the most attractive. One lady went right to the point when she wrote and asked whether her mother could be on the list as she went to Mass every day and was a quiet example of holiness to her family and all the people she met.

Nowadays we tend to think that saints are the "official" canonised people, but in the early Church all the believers

Feast of the week
Saturday 15 October

St Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes with which Christ looks out his compassion to the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless us now.

St Teresa of Avila

were known as saints. It's a word that means holy. There are still so many people like the letter-writer's mother whose goodness and holiness are unsung, but evident to the people they meet and who are embraced by Jesus' love.

John Crone is a regular contributor to Living Word and Weekday Living Word, www.rpbooks.co.uk

The Shepherd will be found wherever the lost sheep is. The Lord, then, should be sought precisely where he wants to find us, not where we presume to find him!

Pope Francis

Today:
2 Kings 5:14-17
2 Timothy 2:8-13
Luke 17:11-19

Monday:
Galatians 4:22-24, 26-27, 31 – 5:1
Luke 11:29-32

Tuesday:
Galatians 5:1-6
Luke 11:37-41

Wednesday:
Galatians 5:18-25
Luke 11:42-46

Thursday:
Ephesians 1:1-10
Luke 11:47-54

Friday:
Ephesians 1:11-14
Luke 12:1-7

Saturday:
Ephesians 1:15-23
Luke 12:8-12

Next Sunday:
Exodus 17:8-13
2 Timothy 3:14 – 4:2
Luke 18:1-8