

SUNDAY PLUS

Gospel joy

By Pope Francis

Glow with the joy of Christ

Goodness always tends to spread. Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us, and any person who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others. As it expands, goodness takes root and develops. If we wish to lead a dignified and fulfilling life, we have to reach out to others and seek their good...

The Gospel offers us the chance to live life on a higher plane, but with no less intensity: "Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others". When the Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelisation, she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfilment. For "here we discover a profound law of reality: that life is attained and matures in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life

to others. This is certainly what mission means". Consequently, an evangeliser must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral!

Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that "delightful and comforting joy of evangelising, even when it is in tears that we must sow... And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelisers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ."

Evangelii Gaudium 9,10



The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew.

Pope Francis

Feast of the week
Sunday 17 September

Stigmata of St Francis of Assisi

St Bonaventure wrote, "Because of this new and astounding miracle unheard of in times past, Francis came down from the mountain a new man adorned with the sacred stigmata, bearing in his body the image of the Crucified, not made by a craftsman in wood or stone, but fashioned in his members by the hand of the living God."

"Stigmata" is a Greek word indicating a "brand" or a "mark." In the Christian context it refers to the bodily marks resembling the wounds of the crucified Christ. St Francis was the first historically recorded person to bear the marks of the crucified Christ in his hands, feet and side.

He received the stigmata on 17 September 1224, two years before his death, while praying on the remote Italian mountaintop of Mt Alverna, where he had gone with two other friars. Brother Leo, the only witness to the account, later testified to their presence on Francis' body.

The joy of forgiveness


By Natasha Pritchard

Today's Gospel has the power to evoke many different reactions in us. It could be the nudge that we needed to forgive somebody who has wronged us. For others, it may cause a sense of frustration, if there is somebody in our lives who makes the same mistake over and over again, making it difficult to keep forgiving them. For some people, the idea of forgiveness might

cause anger – there may be people in our lives for whom forgiveness feels like an impossibility.

Forgiveness is a commendable and generous act, but in practice, it is easier said than done. Yet when we learn to forgive as generously as God forgives us, the fruits of that forgiveness are immeasurable, not only to the person to whom we grant forgiveness, but also to ourselves. It may take weeks, months or years for us to be able to forgive, but when we do, it is a Godly act which can bring us healing, peace and joy.

Natasha Pritchard has worked in Catholic hospital chaplaincy, youth ministry and is now Area Support Chaplain at Methodist Homes.

Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own "yes"
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.  Amen. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*

Today:
Ecclesiasticus 27:30 – 28:7
Romans 14:7-9
Matthew 18:21-35

Monday:
1 Timothy 2:1-8
Luke 7:1-10

Tuesday:
1 Timothy 3:1-13
Luke 7:11-17

Wednesday:
1 Timothy 3:14-16
Luke 7:31-35

Thursday:
Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13
Matthew 9:9-13

Friday:
1 Timothy 6:2-12
Luke 8:1-3

Saturday:
1 Timothy 6:13-16
Luke 8:4-15

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 55:6-9
Philippians 1:20-24, 27
Matthew 20:1-16