

# SUNDAY PLUS

Not to be served but to serve

## First and foremost



By Brian Fahy

“America First” was a slogan first coined by President Woodrow Wilson in his 1916 campaign, promising to keep the United States neutral during World War One. Many others have used the phrase since, including, famously and recently, Donald Trump in his campaign for the Presidency in 2016. When the wider world becomes a difficult place to negotiate, we all tend to retreat to a safer and more homely place in which to concentrate our efforts. Keeping our own house in order, we become strangers to a wider world. No

one can then accuse us of interfering, but we might stand accused of being neglectful of our neighbours in their need.

Jesus finds himself being caught in a trap when his adversaries come along to ask him a “totally innocent” question, about paying taxes to Caesar. They even heap praises onto Jesus – you are an honest man – just to soften him up for the kill. But Jesus is no Mr Nice Guy. Nor is he anyone’s fool. You want to play a game? Let’s play a game. Show me the coinage. Whose face is this?

Politics is always a difficult game to play, but honesty isn’t.

We can all argue the politics of our world. Indeed it is important to do so. It shows how much we care and what we care about. But one thing we should share – honesty. It is important to be honest to God and honest with one another. Honesty comes first.

*Brian Fahy describes himself as an “apprentice poet”. His website is to be found at [www.errispoetry.com](http://www.errispoetry.com)*

Loving Lord, light up my heart. Set me on fire with your love so that it radiates your warmth to everyone I meet.  Amen.

## All in this together

By Mary Bell

Thousands of men and women have answered God’s call to serve in the poorest countries of the world, leaving behind comfortable lives to live in harsh, even dangerous, environments to spread God’s word and help those suffering from all the hardships imaginable.

And here at home there are those brave people whose service involves walking the

streets at night to bring comfort to anyone in need, even if only with a friendly face or a kind word; loving their neighbour in our fractured society where “mission” is serving the marginalised.

Pope Francis says that we live in a world where many people, even if they have material prosperity, suffer from spiritual poverty. He calls it a “spiritual desert”. Yet this is the world into which we have been called to bear witness to Jesus’s Gospel of hope. This is our mission as Christians. We are all in this together.

*Following many years in the classroom, retired teacher and Head of RE, Mary Bell now has time to enjoy the beauties of the natural world around her.*

Today, as the Church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal, there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbours or complete strangers. This is the informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home.

Pope Francis

Feast of the week  
Wednesday 25 October

## St Ambrose Barlow (1585-1641)

Not many parish priests would risk their lives to offer Mass for their parishioners and then feed them on “boiled beef and pottage, goose and mince pies and something hot to drink”. However, following his ordination to the priesthood in 1617, St Ambrose Barlow’s grandmother sponsored his work amongst the poorest people of Leigh – which is why a substantial meal became an essential aspect of his ministry.

During his time in Leigh, Ambrose was arrested and released without charge four times. However, his fifth arrest, along with some parishioners, happened after Mass on Easter Sunday morning, 1641. The laypeople were later released.

This Lancashire lad, born in Chorlton-cum-Hardy, was hanged, drawn and quartered, aged 56, at Lancaster. His cousin rescued Ambrose’s head, which is now a precious relic of the Salford Diocese.

St Ambrose Barlow is one of at least fifteen “Lancaster Martyrs”, executed between 1584 and 1646.



Today: Isaiah 45:1, 4-6  
1 Thessalonians 1:1-5  
Matthew 22:15-21

Monday: Romans 4:20-25  
Luke 12:13-21

Tuesday: Romans 5:12, 15, 17-21  
Luke 12:35-38

Wednesday: Romans 6:12-18  
Luke 12:39-48

Thursday: Romans 6:19-23  
Luke 12:49-53

Friday: Romans 7:18-25  
Luke 12:54-59

Saturday: Ephesians 2:19-22  
Luke 6:12-19

Next Sunday: Exodus 22:20-26  
1 Thessalonians 1:5-10  
Matthew 22:34-40

