

# SUNDAY PLUS

Christ, be our light

## See differently



By Eileen Cole

**R**acial Justice Sunday is the day the Church focuses on the need to oppose racism and pursue racial justice with renewed vigour.

Racism is a blind, stupid and cruel scourge. We should marvel and rejoice in our difference and varied cultures. How boring it would be to be all the same! Our variety and unique ancestries are a gift from God.

Each of us is made, not just good but very good, each called to be a jewel in God's crown. Our gifts are not just for our own good, but

for the good of everyone. How do we share our gifts? How are we open to and how do we welcome the gifts of others? Are we able to see others and their differences as a gift that enriches us?

Gifts are often wrapped, which lends an element of surprise and wonder, but what is within? This is surely the best way to approach those who are different from us, whose skin is of a different hue, who wear a different costume and speak another language.

One of the beautiful aspects of the Catholic

Church is its universality – every race and ethnicity are to be included in the mission of Christ and his Church. Look around you at church today. How many different nationalities are there? And they all belong, because really, underpinning our difference is a unifying characteristic: in the words of St Josemaría Escrivá: "There is really only one race – the race of the children of God".

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War, terrorist attacks, racial or religious persecution and many other affronts to human dignity are judged differently, depending on how convenient it proves for certain, primarily economic, interests. What is true, as long as it is convenient for someone in power, stops being true once it becomes inconvenient. These situations of violence, sad to say, "have become so common as to constitute a real 'third world war' fought piecemeal".

Pope Francis

Many years later, when based in Zambia, arranging for two strangers to meet on a busy street in Lusaka became complicated: I'd honestly not noticed whether Luke, whom I had just met for the first time, was a Zambian or a European and couldn't move beyond describing someone "of average height"!

On Racial Justice Sunday, we remember that recognising differences can be enriching. My friend Ijaz and I delighted in sharing our cultures, peoples and history, learning so much about each other's beloved country.

Racial intolerance and injustice are as useless as discrimination based on hair or eye colour.

*Sr Janet Fearnis is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.*




Feast of the week  
Friday 2 February

### The Presentation of the Lord

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us your building, sheltering others,  
Walls made of living stone.

Christ, be our light.  
Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ, be our light.  
Shine in your church gathered today.

Bernadette Farrell

May the Lord give us the grace to open our hearts to this encounter with his Word, and to be unafraid of joy, to be unafraid of making the feast of joy.  Amen.

Pope Francis

## Enriching differences

By Sr Janet Fearnis FMDM

Shabaz was aggressively sensitive about being a Bangladeshi Muslim woman, newly arrived in Britain. Prepared for an argument, she tackled the university chaplain. "What do you see when I enter the room?" she asked. His reply silenced her: "Shabaz". There were no racial undertones. Her younger sister Ijaz and I were good friends, so his reply made sense. We all longed to see Shabaz at peace.

Today:  
Deuteronomy 18:15-20  
1 Corinthians 7:32-35  
Mark 1:21-28

Monday:  
2 Samuel 15:13-14.  
30: 16:5-13  
Mark 5:1-20

Tuesday:  
2 Samuel 18:9-10. 14.  
24-25. 30 - 19:3  
Mark 5:21-43

Wednesday:  
2 Samuel 24:2. 9-17  
Mark 6:1-6

Thursday:  
1 Kings 2:1-4. 10-12  
Mark 6:7-13

Friday:  
Malachi 3:1-4  
Hebrews 2:14-18  
Luke 2:22-40

Saturday:  
1 Kings 3:4-13  
Mark 6:30-34

Next Sunday:  
Job 7:1-4. 6-7  
1 Corinthians 9:16-19. 22-23  
Mark 1:29-39

