

SUNDAY PLUS

God in our midst

Living in relationship

by Fr Denis McBride
C.Ss.R.

The Jesus story in John's Gospel begins not with an adult Jesus by the river Jordan (Mark) or a genealogy going back to Abraham (Matthew) or the annunciations of the birth of John the Baptist and the birth of Jesus (Luke) but before the creation of the world. John's Messiah does not come from Bethlehem but from outside the realm of creation; neither can he be accurately identified as Jesus of Nazareth because he does not come from there, but from the upper realm.

For John, the details of Jesus' earthly beginnings are irrelevant – no birth story is told, no mother is introduced, no time is recorded, no place is noted, no witnesses are named – because his true origin is beyond the cosmos: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John goes back beyond the beginnings of Mark, Matthew and Luke to rework Genesis and anchor the beginning of the Jesus story in the originality of God.

As the Son is in relationship with the Father, so "the children of God" are those who live in relationship with the one who reveals the Father. As Pope Benedict XVI noted in the introduction to his



first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*: "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction." In

the language of the evangelist that new event is the light come into the world; the new person is Jesus Christ.

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk.

God in the family

by Phil Ferguson

"I don't know what it's going to be like when we're 'back to normal' and the children return to school", my colleague complained. "Working from home hasn't been easy and the children have really missed their friends. Talking on Skype and WhatsApp hasn't been the same."

Yet, almost in the same breath and in spite of coping with working at home alongside her husband – also working from home – and her two young children, Sandy admitted that the coronavirus pandemic had offered unique moments of family togetherness. The special times included allowing her five-year-old son to bake the blue cake for which he longed. True, it ended up the colour of toothpaste...

There were family ups and downs during the course of the

year, but weren't there moments when, whatever was happening, you stopped and thought "God is in this somewhere"? Thank God for those times of family togetherness, whatever, whenever and wherever they were!

Phil Ferguson is a former teacher.

"Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, may the Lord allow us to be artisans of peace – and this begins at home, in the family: artisans of peace – each day of the new year. And I wish you, once more, a happy and holy year. Please, do not forget to pray for me."

Pope Francis

Privilege beyond all others

by Sr Janet Fearn
FMDM

Did your parents tell you what was the very first word that you spoke? At a guess it might have been "Mama" or "Dada" or "Baba". Whatever you chose to say, you gave them seemingly endless joy. They won't have any idea of the number of times that they repeated that one word back to you, hoping to hear you copy the sound and, from one word, progress to two, three...

If you have children, you will also treasure those first sounds which the whole world could identify as words.

"The Word became flesh." The Father chose our human words,

our limited vocabulary, to speak the eternal Word in our world, our culture, our language and our homes.

God gave us the unique privilege of using our human words to make the Word really and truly present in our every thought, word, action and relationship. God asked us to use our words to make the Word become flesh. There is no greater privilege.

Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.

Loving God, let my words help your Word to become alive and active in your beautiful world. Let this New Year be one of hope. Amen.



Happy New Year from all of us at Redemptorist Publications

Today:
Ecclesiasticus
24:1-2, 8-12
Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18
John 1:1-18

(S) Isaiah 60:1-6
Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

Monday:
1 John 3:7-10
John 1:35-42
(S) 1 John 3:22 – 4:6
Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Tuesday:
1 John 3:11-21
John 1:43-51
(S) 1 John 4:7-10
Mark 6:34-44

Wednesday:
Isaiah 60:1-6
Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12
(S) 1 John 4:11-18
Mark 6:45-52

Thursday:
1 John 3:22 – 4:6
Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25
(S) 1 John 4:19 – 5:4
Luke 4:14-22

Friday:
1 John 4:7-10
Mark 6:34-44
(S) 1 John 5:5-13
Luke 5:12-16

Saturday:
1 John 4:11-18
Mark 6:45-52
(S) 1 John 5:14-21
John 3:22-30

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 55:1-11
1 John 5:1-9
Mark 1:7-11