SUNDAY PLUS

Do things differently

It sounds simple

by Siân Owen-Owen

The 1976 drought was one of the driest, sunniest and warmest summers of the twentieth century. Determined not to be defeated by sunny Guildford's water shortages, Sr Conrad visited every ward, collecting empty intravenous fluid bags and tubing. She placed every single plant in the hospital greenhouse on a carefully monitored drip. An elderly former nurse who had worked in remote African mission hospitals, she would save her beloved plants at all costs. As a result, even in temperatures which could cause other gardeners to despair, Sr Conrad's flowers bloomed magnificently.

Think differently. Jesus told his disciples that instead of working as fishermen, they would reach out to people rather than shoals of fish. In other words, he instructed them to use their existing gifts but simply use them differently.



We saw this with amazing clarity and ingenuity during last year's coronavirus pandemic. With churches closed and pastoral opportunities limited, the Church used social media in an unprecedented way. Pope Francis led by example: anything he could do, he did… and we saw similar energy and enthusiasm across the world in parishes great and small.

People needed encouragement and support in a unique way during the isolation, lockdowns and crises of the battle against an unseen enemy – and the Church responded. "Thinking differently" ensured that people need not be alone.

Jesus wanted his disciples to "think differently". Nothing more. Nothing less. All they had to do was to look at their existing gifts and talents and use them for the good of others. Sounds simple, doesn't it?

Siân Owen-Owen is a Catholic freelance writer and a former nurse and midwife.

Real icons

by Mary Bell

Saints, we are told, are our models for living but virgin martyrs and holy hermits never seemed very relevant to our own times.

In the school library was a series of well-thumbed small books outlining the lives and achievements of modern men and women whose generosity and courage made a difference to others, among them Father Damian, Martin Luther King and Cicely Saunders, the founder of the hospice movement, all admirable rolemodels.

However, I believe, if we look, saintliness is really all around us. Think of the carers looking lovingly after the sick and disabled, hospital nurses putting on big welcoming smiles even if their feet are killing them and, my own favourite, the check-out assistant who deals patiently with a fumbling elderly shopper, maintaining cheery banter throughout.

I challenge you to think of an example of someone who by their Christ-like humanity makes a difference to everybody's life. I expect you can.

Mary Bell is a retired teacher, U3A lecturer and devoted grandmother.

Loving Lord, you challenged the apostles to use their talents differently so that they could spread your message to others. Help me to identify my gifts and see how I might become your more effective follower and friend. ✝ Amen.

Dare to be different!

by Michael George

Contributing to a school self-evaluation exercise a ten-year-old pupil wrote: "You can't blend in when you're born to stand out." I felt proud of this recognition of each person's uniqueness, and articulation of the school's approach towards promoting and valuing self-confidence.

I have always believed that for teachers, creating outstanding learning experiences for children means taking a few risks and doing something a bit differently. Feeling safe to embrace being an individual and assured enough to take considered risks have been important principles for me as a school leader.

To bystanders the disciples must have appeared reckless. They left their jobs, families and homes to follow Jesus. They dared to be different. They dared to stand out. They dared to take a risk.

For "daring" not to be reckless it's not a fishing net but a different net that's needed - the safety net that is the love of Jesus.

After many years in the classroom, Michael George is now a lay school chaplain.

"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."

Pope Francis

Today:	Monday:	Tuesday:	Wednesday:	Thursday:	Friday:	Saturday:	Next Sunday:
Jonah 3:1-5. 10 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 Mark 1:14-20	Acts 22:3-16 or 9:1-22 Mark 16:15-18	1 Timothy 1:1-8 or Titus 1:1-5 Luke 10:1-9	Hebrews 10:11-18 Mark 4:1-20	Hebrews 10:19-25 Mark 4:21-25	Hebrews 10:32-39 Mark 4:26-34	Hebrews 11:1-2. 8-19 Mark 4:35-41	Deuteronomy 18:15-20 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 Mark 1:21-28

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