SUNDAY PLUS

Teach truthfully

# Teach with authority

by Patrick van der Vorst

In today's Gospel reading, Mark writes that Jesus taught with authority. Jesus wasn't just interpreting the laws, but was teaching with authority. This was different from the scribes or rabbis whose teaching was dependent on what others had said or written before them. Jesus was teaching with his own authority, however. This authority also led to casting out devils, as described in today's passage. Such exorcisms are a witness to the final victory of the kingdom of God over evil and death.

Why is Mark recounting this episode at the beginning of his Gospel and wanting to share this "teaching with authority" in his very first chapter? Mark wants to set the tone and make the point that Jesus came to heal. Jesus, from the very start of his ministry revealed how the gift of Christ's power is to be revealed: not in dominance but in healing! Casting out devils is part of this healing, again, with authority.

The Gothic illuminated manuscript page on vellum depicts St Francis of Assisi performing an exorcism. The black winged devil is leaping out of the woman's mouth. Assisi is depicted in the background. I love the way the exorcism is depicted. It is a very simple, yet very effective way to show what happens, in a single illustration. Just like Jesus, Saint Francis and many of the saints spoke with courage, wisdom and... with loving and caring authority.

Patrick van der Vorst gave up his career in art and antiques in order to study for the priesthood at the Beda College.



*Saint Francis of Assisi performs an exorcism on a woman*, illustration from *Vie et Miracles de Saint François d'Assise*, painted miniature on vellum, executed c.1480. © Bibliothèque Nationale de France, NAF 28640.

## Dare to be different

by Eldred Willey

Edith Cavell was born towards the end of the stable Victorian era in a peaceful English backwater. From the lawn of her father's rectory she could view a pretty pond in one direction and the mediaeval church tower in another.

She might have always lived in this idyllic setting had she not felt a call to nursing, which took her to Belgium during World War I. After the Germans overran the country, she was executed in 1915 for helping wounded British soldiers to escape.

The men whom Jesus called came mostly from a similarly stable rural community, where they enjoyed respect and mutual support. Stepping out of such a setting would mean taking a path of no return. For the majority it would mean a violent end in a far country.

What a remarkable attraction Jesus must possess, for men and women down the ages to have made such a choice. How rich our lives are as a result of it.

Eldred Willey works as a communications officer for the Diocese of East Anglia.

"Justice based on mercy is the path to follow in order to achieve a dignified life to which every human being has a right."

Pope Francis

## If truth were told...

by Catherine Pepinster

For the Jewish people, Moses was the great authority – and that authority was recognised in the trust they gave him. But Moses recognises that another prophet is to come – someone also with authority. That word comes up again in Mark's account of Jesus.

The quality of authority is sometimes hard to define but when a person has it, people trust what they say, they listen. They recognise the truth of what is being said.

Jesus' authority has lasted through time because of the truth of his words: a truth that is about love and justice. On Racial Justice Sunday, we recognise what Jesus has taught us about one another: all are loved by God, all matter to him regardless of the colour of their skin, or their gender, or where they were born. To follow in Jesus' footsteps is to listen, to trust his authority, and to treat others as he treated the people around him, with compassion.

Catherine Pepinster is a former editor of *The Tablet* and the author of *The Keys and the Kingdom: the British and the papacy from John Paul II to Francis*, published by T&T Clark.

Lord of wisdom, be with teachers and help them to inspire their students with your gifts of love, justice and compassion. Accompany those people who experience injustice and discrimination. ✝ Amen.

| Today: | Monday: | Tuesday: | Wednesday: | Thursday: | Friday: | Saturday: | Next Sunday: |
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| Deuteronomy 18:15-20<br>1 Corinthians 7:32-35<br>Mark 1:21-28 | Hebrews 11:32-40<br>Mark 5:1-20 | Malachi 3:1-4<br>Hebrews 2:14-18<br>Luke 2:22-40 | Hebrews 12:4-7. 11-15<br>Mark 6:1-6 | Hebrews 12:18-19. 21-24<br>Mark 6:7-13 | Hebrews 13:1-8<br>Mark 6:14-29 | Hebrews 13:15-17. 20-21<br>Mark 6:30-34 | Job 7:1-4. 6-7<br>1 Corinthians 9:16-19. 22-23<br>Mark 1:29-39 |

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