

SUNDAY PLUS

Be prepared

The family meal

by Paul Higginson

In today's Gospel Jesus asks the disciples to get ready for the Passover meal. They are to find a large upper room or guest room and make the necessary preparations. When evening comes Jesus gives them his body and blood and asks them to "do this in memory of me".

Each time we go to Mass we too are asked to prepare a "guest room" for Jesus, a place where he might reside. We are called to make these preparations in our heart, and yet we often find there is little room for him. Other things reside there, such as anger, disappointment, guilt, greed or bitterness. It's time to declutter, to get rid of those things that prevent Jesus from coming to live within us.

At Mass the bread and wine changes into the Body and Blood of Jesus. But important as this transformation is, we need to focus on the inner changes that Jesus wants and needs from us. Inviting him in is a serious commitment and not a passive event. It demands some hard work and positive action. Finding room for Jesus in our lives means letting go of unhelpful ways of thinking and acting that prevent

us from opening our hearts to him and to our neighbour.

Jesus changes the bread and wine into his Body and Blood so that we can receive him into our own body, and by so doing change our "hearts of stone into hearts of flesh". Is your guest room ready for Christ?

Having recently retired from teaching, Paul Higginson is a catechist at the Sacred Heart church in Bushey.



Held in a communist prison in Saigon and with three drops of wine and one drop of water in the palm of his hand, Cardinal Van Thuan celebrated Mass. "At 9.30 every evening when 'lights out' rang, everyone had to be lying down. I bent over my wooden board and celebrated Mass, by heart of course, and distributed Communion to my neighbours under their mosquito nets. At night, the prisoners took turns and spent time in adoration." ✚ Amen.

Sharing food

by Moire O'Sullivan

It can be hard to sit down and eat together as a family. Someone's working late, someone has a programme to watch or friends to meet, another just doesn't want to eat what's on offer.

But what if we had a less complicated version of a "family meal"?

Last summer I found myself sitting on a wall with my two young sons. We were on a brief trip to the seaside. I decided to buy us some cones from a parked-up ice-cream van.

I watched my boys munching contently on the wafer, melted streams of white ice cream running down their little hands. We sat there together, quietly looking out to sea. To this day, it is one of my happiest family memories.

Sharing food is a perfect excuse to sit down with loved ones. Jesus understood this when he shared bread and wine with his friends. Let us take these chances more often, even if it is just enjoying a quick ice cream together at the beach.

Moire O'Sullivan is a mountain runner, adventure racer, an author, mum and a regular contributor to *Look*, the younger children's Sunday sheet of Gospel-focused activities and games, available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk.

Room in the heart

by Canon Paul Douthwaite

Birthdays, engagement and marriage are examples of ritual celebrations of significant life events. There are also everyday rituals such as sitting together for a meal. Every ritual is an outward expression of the significant relationship that exists between those who will participate.

Today's Gospel recalls the combined ritual of the Passover, an annual celebration of remembrance of the covenant between

God and the Hebrew people, and a meal. The detailed preparation of the venue, the upper room, highlights its significance. Of greater significance are the events at the meal, in the breaking of bread and the offering of the cup. Jesus transformed the Hebrew Passover into the Eucharist, a new ritual by which he would not only be remembered but also be present.

Our personal preparation for ritual is the most important element if we are to be truly present. The ritual becomes wholly significant when we make room in our hearts to receive God and others.

Canon Paul Douthwaite is the National Catholic Chaplain for Prisons and HMPPS Roman Catholic Faith Adviser.

"We are a community, nourished by the body and blood of Christ. Communion with the body of Christ is an effective sign of unity, of communion, of sharing. One cannot participate in the Eucharist without committing oneself to mutual fraternity, which is sincere."

Pope Francis

Today:
Exodus 24:3-8
Hebrews 9:11-15
Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

Monday:
2 Corinthians 1:1-7
Matthew 5:1-12

Tuesday:
2 Corinthians 1:18-22
Matthew 5:13-16

Wednesday:
2 Corinthians 3:4-11
Matthew 5:17-19

(I&S): St Columba (Feast)
Colossians 1:24-29
Mark 10:17-30

Thursday:
2 Corinthians 3:15 4:1, 3-6
Matthew 5:20-26

Friday:
Hosea 11:1, 3-4, 8-9
Ephesians 3:8-12, 14-19
John 19:31-37

Saturday:
Isaiah 61:9-11
Luke 2:41-51

Next Sunday:
Ezekiel 17:22-24
2 Corinthians 5:6-10
Mark 4:26-34