

# SUNDAY PLUS

Who am I?

## In season and out of season

by Fr Maurice O'Mahony C.Ss.R.

St Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, writes: "Preach the Gospel in season or not, welcome or unwelcome". It seems there is no optimum time to proclaim Jesus and the Gospel. Yes, for many people in every generation the proclamation of God's love and the promise of salvation is "Good News". Equally, there is often opposition.

Jesus experienced similar responses during his public ministry. His time was dominated by two powerful groups: the Romans who ruthlessly occupied the land, and the religious leaders who exercised great power over the people. Yet, Jesus was not discouraged; he proclaimed the coming reign of God with a clear, challenging message: repent and change your lives!

Jesus maintained a low profile during those early days, protecting the message and giving it time to root in his first followers. However,

everything about him led many to believe he might be the Messiah. That is why he asked his disciples, "Who do people say I am?" and followed it with a personal challenge, "But you... who do you say I am?" Then and now, that answer made the difference.

The people among whom he ministered made the link between Jesus and the prophecy of Isaiah. The religious authorities also heard about him, his activities and, alarmingly, what the people were saying. Jesus knew these two worlds would eventually collide

and he told his disciples that he would be handed over, suffer and be put to death.

We are Jesus' disciples in 2021. Many are indifferent, even hostile, to faith. Yet, Jesus calls us to share the message. It is our privilege to act in his name, in season or not, welcome or unwelcome. So, be courageous!

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"The love of God is not something vague or generic; the love of God has a name and a face: Jesus Christ."

Pope Francis

## Calvary is a beginning

by Phil Ferguson

Wildfires raged throughout many tree-covered areas of the world during the hot summer months and severe drought of 2020. Hosepipe bans and standpipes became a daily event for thousands of householders as fire brigades heroically tried to extinguish flames and, paradoxically, to keep their use of water to a minimum. Farmers watched helplessly as huge cracks appeared in their dry fields and thirsty crops withered and died.

Many television documentaries covered not only the drought and wildfire experiences but also flooding, hurricanes and earthquakes, all possibly effects of climate change.

Time and again, seemingly "ordinary" people showed themselves capable of extraordinary courage, generosity and self-sacrifice. Their Calvary was a beginning, not an end.

Feast of the week  
Tuesday 14 September  
Triumph of the cross

The young Emperor Constantine was heading out to fight the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (AD 312) when he looked up towards the sun and saw a cross of light above it and the words, "In this sign, you will conquer." That night, according to tradition, he had a vision in which Jesus explained the meaning of the sign, which Constantine ordered his army to make its military standard. He subsequently always claimed that his victory in battle the following day

was the result of his vision of the cross.

Soon afterwards, Constantine became the first Christian Roman Emperor. In 313, he issued the Edict of Milan which allowed Christianity to be freely practised.

With the conversion of her son, Constantine's mother, Helena, soon also became a Christian. On his instructions – and with his money – she travelled to the Holy Land in search of Calvary, the Holy Sepulchre and the remains of "the True Cross". She believed she found all three, but Helena's enormous contribution to early Christianity is another story...

All was not lost. Within days of the first rainfall following devastating wildfires, blackened woodland started to turn green. Tiny blades of grass emerged through the parched soil. Bit by bit, the world started to change. In seeing endings, we discovered new life.

*Phil Ferguson is a former teacher.*

Lord, when times are hard, it can be difficult to see that you offer a choice. If I can see who you really are and follow you in everything that I say, think and do, even my Calvary can be a new beginning and the start of a journey of discovery. Amen.

Today:  
Isaiah 50:5-9  
James 2:14-18  
Mark 8:27-35

Monday:  
1 Timothy 2:1-8  
Luke 7:1-10

Tuesday:  
Numbers 21:4-9  
Philippians 2:6-11  
John 3:13-17

Wednesday:  
Hebrews 5:7-9  
John 19:25-27  
or Luke 2:33-35

Thursday:  
1 Timothy 4:12-16  
Luke 7:36-50

Friday:  
1 Timothy 6:2-12  
Luke 8:1-3

Saturday:  
1 Timothy 6:13-16  
Luke 8:4-15

Next Sunday:  
Wisdom 2:12, 17-20  
James 3:16 – 4:3  
Mark 9:30-37