

SUNDAY PLUS

Truly blessed

Flawed – but truly loved

By Mary Bell

Every beautiful Persian carpet was woven with an imperfection deliberately introduced into the pattern to emphasise that only God is perfect.

We are all miraculous creations but every one of us is flawed as Jesus well knew.

When I was young, I used to find this Gospel very difficult. It seemed to suggest the impossible. Jesus is advocating perfection and reminding us that we need

to keep God's laws to the letter in order to be blessed with eternal life. As he goes through the list of the commandments his words seem harsh and unrelenting. Yet, on mature reflection, can we not imagine that they might have been delivered in a compassionate tone of voice with even a touch of humour? "Do not swear by your own head since you cannot turn a single hair white or black."

In taking each commandment in turn he stresses its importance by going one step further – don't kill but, even if you have been angry,

be quickly reconciled. If we turn the negatives into positives we get a more coherent picture: be entirely faithful to your spouse; keep your vows; speak honestly and truthfully without the need for pointless oaths.

The psalmist asks God to open our eyes to the wonders of his law.

Jesus knows how hard it can be for people to lead totally good lives but he must deliver this most important message: that it is necessary to obey God's laws fully because that is the only way to human happiness and fulfilment.

Following many years in the classroom, retired teacher and school principal, Mary Bell now has time to enjoy the beauties of the natural world around her.



The joy of the Gospel arises from a heart which, in its poverty, rejoices and marvels at the works of God, like the heart of Our Lady, whom all generations call "blessed". May Mary, Mother of the poor and Star of the new evangelisation help us to live the Gospel, to embody the Beatitudes in our lives and to have the courage always to be happy.

Pope Francis

Unexpected blessings

By Brian Fahy

We were standing in a poor glen in the west of Ireland. "There are no skyscrapers here, Uncle Hugh", I said. He was quiet for a moment. "No, and there won't be," he replied. Then he added, "But if I don't put the potato in the ground, the man in the skyscraper won't do so well." Down to earth wisdom!

No matter how sophisticated our world becomes, with all our technologies and techniques, life's basic truths remain the same.

Learning those truths and being able to practise them can be a journey in itself. Yet "to behave faithfully is within your power."

Superficial behaviour, our public image, is a powerful distraction today, and the stuff of daily papers, but virtue must go deeper than that. The unseen potato in the ground produces the stalk, the flower and the fruit. Virtue in the heart does the same. It produces fruit that feeds the world.

Brian Fahy describes himself as an "apprentice poet". His website is to be found at www.errispoetry.com.

Feast of the week

Saturday 18 February

Bl John of Fiesole OP
(Fra Angelico) (1395-1455)

Even if you've never heard of Bl John of Fiesole (Fra Angelico), you will recognise at least some of his many paintings.

The nineteenth-century artist William Michael Rossetti, brother of Dante Gabriel and Christina, wrote:

"From various accounts of Fra Angelico's life, it is possible to gain some sense of why he was deserving of canonisation. He led the devout and ascetic life of a Dominican friar, and never rose above that rank; he followed the dictates of the order in caring for the poor; he was always good-humoured. All of his many paintings were of divine subjects, and it seems that he never altered or retouched them, perhaps from a religious conviction that, because his paintings were divinely inspired, they should retain their original form. He was wont to say that he who illustrates the acts of Christ should be with Christ. It is averred that he never handled a brush without fervent prayer and he wept when he painted a Crucifixion."

Lord, life is full of blessings if I take the time to look for them. Thank you for all the people who have, in one way or another, been blessings on my journey through life. Amen.

Today:
Ecclesiasticus 15:15-20
1 Corinthians 2:6-10
Matthew 5:17-37

Monday:
Genesis 4:1-15. 25
Mark 8:11-13

Tuesday:
Genesis 6:5-8; 7:1-5. 10
Mark 8:14-21

Wednesday:
Genesis 8:6-13. 20-22
Mark 8:22-26

Thursday:
Genesis 9:1-13
Mark 8:27-33

Friday:
Genesis 11:1-9
Mark 8:34-9:1

Saturday:
Hebrews 11:1-7
Mark 9:2-13

Next Sunday:
Leviticus 19:1-2. 17-18
1 Corinthians 3:16-23
Matthew 5:38-48