

# SUNDAY PLUS

## New opportunities

By Michael George

Education Day, celebrated this weekend, is a day of prayer and celebration for all those in the world of education. Most formal education takes place in community contexts: in schools, nurseries, colleges and universities. In each of these places, learning takes place alongside one's peers. Education has a living social dimension, practised every minute of every day.

Being part of a community, whether an educating community or otherwise, requires certain things. Selflessness is important, thinking of the good of the whole community, not just of oneself. Personal honesty, reliability and a sense of commitment matter.

Being able to listen is another important prerequisite. If we do not listen, how do we know the ideas of others? If we do not listen, how do we know the needs of others? How can we build an inclusive community?

A strong community is also one that is led by consistent and unchanging values, but which does not stand still. An outstanding school only remains outstanding by remaining faithful to its values whilst continuing to evaluate, improve and make – and make the most of – new opportunities. Successful communities allow and encourage themselves to be refreshed and re-energised.

Today's Gospel reminds us that strength is found in community and that the strongest community is the community gathered around Christ at its centre. Christ never changes. In this Christ-centred community, members are gathered to listen to Christ and to invite Christ to listen to them, with sure confidence that without fail, he will.



Michael George has served Catholic primary schools as a teacher and headteacher for more than twenty years.

Help us, Lord, to be witnesses of life and hope. May we never close a door to students who need hope and faith in the future. ✚ Amen.

## Open their hearts

By Paul Higginson

On Education Sunday Jesus' words in today's Gospel remind us that in our schools, where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. Education is about opening minds to possibilities. But as we get older, we often close our minds and hearts, afraid of change or renewal. But following Christ is a constant invitation to be open to the Spirit. As Jesus says at the Last Supper, "The

Holy Spirit... will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you". What is it that we need to be reminded of? Are we open to the possibility of learning new things, of changing our behaviour, putting into loving daily practice the teachings of Christ?

"Lifelong learning" means we are never too old to learn new things and make life-changes – let us resolve to allow the Spirit to be our guide and teacher in the week ahead.

Paul Higginson is a retired teacher, and author of *Doing Christianity: How religion is about what you do, not what you believe.*

Feast of the week  
Thursday 14 September



## The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

"Today, the Church suggests a dialogue with this mystery of the cross, with this God who made himself to be sin, out of love for me. Each one of us can say, 'out of love for me'... How do I carry the cross? – as a reminder? When I make the sign of the cross, am I aware of what I am doing? How do I wear the cross? — only as a symbol of belonging to a religious group? How do I wear the cross? – as an ornament, a piece of gold jewellery with many precious stones? Or, have I learned to carry it on my shoulders, where it hurts?"

Pope Francis

I think first of families, called to a primary and vital mission of education. Families are the first place where the values of love and fraternity, togetherness and sharing, concern and care for others are lived out and handed on. They are also the privileged milieu for transmitting the faith, beginning with those first simple gestures of devotion which mothers teach their children.

Pope Francis

Today:  
Ezekiel 33:7-9  
Romans 13:8-10  
Matthew 18:15-20

Monday:  
Colossians 1:24-23  
Luke 6:6-11

Tuesday:  
Colossians 2:6-15  
Luke 6:12-19

Wednesday:  
Colossians 3:1-11  
Luke 6:20-26

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

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

Saturday:  
1 Timothy 1:15-17  
Luke 6:43-49

Next Sunday:  
Ecclesiasticus 27:30 – 28:7  
Romans 14:7-9  
Matthew 18:21-35