

SUNDAY PLUS



Start at home

A Year of the Word

So precious!

by Moire O'Sullivan

Nothing is ever what it seems. I arrived in Kenya at the tender age of twenty-three, determined to help the less fortunate. I volunteered at a day-care centre in Nairobi, minding mentally challenged children who lived in the nearby slum. I assumed it would be a depressing, yet worthwhile mission.

What I didn't expect were the smiles and handshakes, the songs and laughter that often came from these children and their carers. These people had every reason to be down, to curse their poverty and situation, yet seemed to amazingly rise above it. These slum-dwellers could

have easily claimed that they were last in life. Somehow, however, they were happier and more grateful than me, even though I had so much more materially than them. So who really was last in that day-care centre?

We apparently live in the first world, in a place where we don't need to worry about our daily survival. And yet, if we are really first, why do so many of us feel lonely, unfulfilled, last in life? Why do we often curse the shortfalls around us when, in comparison with others, we already have so much?

Maybe what the landowner in today's Gospel meant to say was, "Those who seem to be last, might actually be first" and vice versa. Maybe we need to



learn from those who are seemingly last in our world, so that we look out for each other more and perhaps be a little more grateful and happier.

Moire O'Sullivan is a mountain runner, adventure racer, 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

Image: Poor Kenyan children enthusiastically posing for camera from a village adjacent to Kakamega quarry. Jordon Sharp / Shutterstock.com

It's not about winning

by Jimmy Mulgrew

I have bitter sweet memories about growing up in Belfast in the 1950s. As my father died when I was eight years old, my three older brothers and sister rallied round and took me under their wings.

I remember them letting me get out of bed and come downstairs to listen as they swapped stories about what had happened at their workplace that day. It was even more heart-warming to see my mother gradually start to laugh again.

They took turns at taking me to the cinema, theatre and football matches. Looking back,

I'm sure they would have preferred to go out with their friends. Each time I hear the song, "He ain't heavy, he's my brother", it strikes a chord with me.

I'm sure Jesus felt the same with his disciples around him. They brought joy, support and comfort. It was brotherly love at its purest.

Jimmy Mulgrew is best-known as a comedian by the name of Jimmy Cricket.

Loving Lord, if I drop a pebble into a puddle, the ripples spread out in all directions. Let me be like a pebble and send ripples of your love to everyone whom I know and love. Together, let us build a more loving world. 🕊 Amen.

"It is necessary to rediscover the plan drawn by God for the family, to reaffirm its greatness and irreplaceability in the service of life and society."

Pope Francis

In line for what?

by Michael George

Several years ago I ran in the British Universities Cross-Country Championships. I was out of my depth in this competitive field and trailed in 221st out of 224 finishers. As the finish approached, with no other runners in sight in front or behind, a spectator shouted, "Remember what it says in the Bible: 'The last will be first, and the first will be last!'"

Quoting from today's Gospel, the spectator was not saying that next time I would win the race,

but instead provided a reminder that there is a more important prize to be won through humble kindness and heartfelt generosity. Rather than focusing on how muddy I was, or how much pain I was experiencing, the 220 who had finished in front of me and the three who had finished behind deserved my respect and congratulations: put first not because of finishing position but as fellow children of God.

Michael George has served Catholic primary schools as a teacher and headteacher for more than twenty years. He now works as a lay school chaplain.

Dear Parishioner,

It is with much delight that we can return to the public celebration of Holy Mass. A warm welcome back! We have all lived in the wilderness for too long, some of us ending up feeling lonely and afraid.

We can now enjoy a long-awaited return to the community celebration of our faith, to togetherness, to being nourished and fed by the Bread of Life.

Let us give thanks for all that we have received, all that has been taken away, and all that has been left behind. It is our intention to repeat this message in our Newsletters to remind us to reflect on the past and rejoice in the present as we reunite around the altar to receive, once more, the Eucharist.

Today: Isaiah 55:6-9
Philippians 1:20-24, 27
Matthew 20:1-16

Monday: Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13
Matthew 9:9-13

Tuesday: Proverbs 21:1-6, 10-13
Luke 8:19-21

Wednesday: Proverbs 30:5-9
Luke 9:1-6

Thursday: Ecclesiastes 1:2-11
Luke 9:7-9

Friday: Ecclesiastes 3:1-11
Luke 9:18-22

Saturday: Ecclesiastes 11:9 - 12:8
Luke 9:43-45

Next Sunday: Ezekiel 18:25-28
Philippians 2:1-11
Matthew 21:28-32