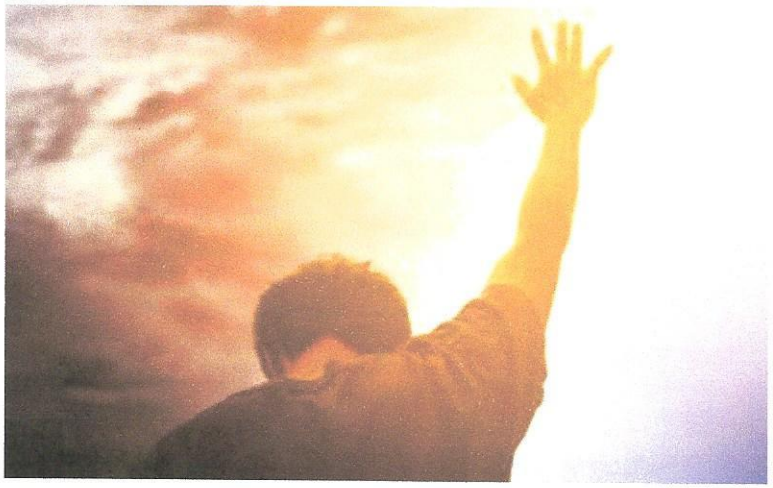
21 February 2021

SUNDAY PLUS

The time is NOW!

Respond to Jesus

by Fr Paul Douthwaite



Today's Gospel passage immediately follows St Mark's opening verses in which he discloses not only Jesus' earthly home as Galilee, but also the revelation of him as the Messiah and the Son of God. Clearly, the evangelist wished to impress upon his audience that Jesus was at one and the same time deeply human and eternally divine. In this first adult encounter with Jesus after John has announced and baptised him, the focus is placed on the humanity of Jesus. In his forty-day experience in the wilderness we are told that he battled with human temptation, that which potentially leads to sin. However, Jesus' response to temptation and satan was far from human.

In exiting the wilderness Jesus immediately embraces his divinity and his divine mandate. He approaches temptation and sin head-on and announces to the people "The time is NOW! Repent!" There is haste in his message and he demands an immediate human response to the divine promise of a heavenly kingdom. Jesus, in his message of "repent", inherently links the living out of our finite human existence with a divine promise of immortality in the kingdom of heaven.

In announcing that "The time is NOW" Jesus warns us that if we hit out in temptation, if we rest on our laurels when we are tested then, as human beings, we will fall into sin. However, if we immediately respond to Jesus' divine invitation to repent, we will overcome temptation, avoid sin and inherit the promised kingdom.

Fr Paul Douthwaite is the National Catholic Chaplain for Prisons and HMPPS/NOMS Catholic Faith Adviser.

Dust and ashes

by Katie Knight

Prisoners and guards gathered in the concentration camp of Görlitz in Silesia to hear the music of a French Jewish prisoner. Oliver Messaien created his *Quartet for the End of Time* in 1941 using the only four instruments available: a cello, a piano, a violin and a clarinet – and, as a moment of hope, inserted birdsong into his score.

Similarly, Vedran Smailović will forever be remembered as "the cellist of Sarajevo". When a mortar round killed twenty-two people in a food queue in a ruined Sarajevo marketplace, he courageously performed Albinoni's *Adagio in G Minor* for twenty-two days, one day for each victim, ignoring the sniper fire aimed at him.

Lent is a time of dust and ashes, but it is also – uniquely – hope-filled. Messaien and Smailović longed for new life amidst chaos and despair. Our own chaos is different from theirs. We have forty days in which to do a bit of spring-cleaning in our hearts and lives. Lent prepares for Easter.

Katie Knight is a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

"Kingdom of heaven is our common goal, a goal that cannot be only about tomorrow. We have to implore it and begin to experience it today, amid the indifference that so often surrounds and silences the sick and disabled, the elderly and the abandoned, refugees and immigrant workers."

Pope Francis

A time for every purpose…

by Max Mathews

Just as a new year can encourage fresh resolutions, the Lenten period is an opportunity to give our spiritual lives a spring-clean.

Lent begins with the symbolic placement of ashes, representing penance, and dust across our foreheads.

The ash tells us to repent: to turn away from our sometimes messy and sinful ways towards God's ways. Peter describes this act of repentance as "the pledge of a good conscience given to God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ".

Similarly, the priest telling us that we are dust and to dust we shall return is less a reminder of our own mortality than encouragement to make changes now rather than later.

When Jesus returns from the wilderness, he urges us to repent and believe in the Gospel: so faith in the good news is part of this transformation but we are also called to translate that faith into tangible action in our own lives.

There's no time to waste – so start now!

Max Mathews is a young Catholic student of journalism.

Jesus, "now" can be messy. Help me to use my "now" during Lent so that my tomorrow will be totally yours ✝ Amen.

Today:	Monday:	Tuesday:	Wednesday:	Thursday:	Friday:	Saturday:	Next Sunday:
Genesis 9:8-15 1 Peter 3:18-22 Mark 1:12-15	1 Peter 5:1-4 Matthew 16:13-19	Isaiah 55:10-11 Matthew 6:7-15	Jonah 3:1-10 Luke 11:29-32	Esther 4:17 Matthew 7:7-12	Ezekiel 18:21-28 Matthew 5:20-26	Deuteronomy 26:16-19 Matthew 5:43-48	Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13, 15-18 Romans 8:31-34 Mark 9:2-10

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