

# SUNDAY PLUS

Search for Jesus

## God in the here-and-now



Holy Family sculpture by Josephina de Vasconcellos

By Paul Higginson


Today's Gospel tells us how Mary and Joseph lost Jesus and spent three days searching for him before finding him in the Temple. We are all, in our own way, searching for Christ, and many of us find this a difficult process. However, our desire to seek him, a desire put there by God, means that we have already chosen the right path: we are halfway there. "Search, and you shall find," says Jesus. He isn't playing hide and seek with us! Christ cannot make himself more visible – he is

everywhere in creation. St Bonaventure said that "God's fingerprints" are everywhere. Human love, forgiveness and compassion are divine love, forgiveness and compassion. This is the incarnation today, Christ enfleshed in the ordinary moments of our life. We can only ever experience God in the here-and-now; as St Paul says, "he is everything and he is in everything". Do we have the eyes to see the God who is everywhere and in everyone?

The one who searches will always find – and finding God is rarely a "thunderbolt moment", but a quiet and calm acceptance and realisation that he is with me, that I am loved, and that is enough, and all will be well. The Gospel of Jesus tells us that our life is not so much about reaching out to find God, but about God reaching out to find us.

God does not withhold himself from us, but we withhold ourselves from God. Finding God is really allowing God to find us.

*Following many years in the classroom and as a parish catechist, Paul Higginson is finding that retirement is enabling him to devote even more of his time to supporting his parish.*

Lord God, watch over, protect my family and all those whom I know and love. My family isn't perfect – and neither am I, but we are your gift to each other.  Amen.

### The family: the "yes" of God

By Pope Francis

One might ask: does the Gospel continue to be a joy for the world? And also: does the family continue to be good news for today's world? I am sure the answer is yes! And this "yes" is firmly based on God's plan. The love of God is his "yes" to all creation and at the heart of the latter is man. It is God's "yes" to the union between man and woman, in openness and service to life in all its phases; it is God's "yes" and his commitment to a humanity that is often wounded, mistreated and dominated by a lack of love. The family, therefore, is the "yes" of God as love. Only starting from love can the family manifest, spread and regenerate God's love in the world. Without love, we cannot live as children of God, as couples, parents and brothers.

*Letter announcing the Ninth World Meeting of Families in Dublin, 21-26 August 2018.*

Feast of the week

Saturday 1 January

### Mary, Mother of God

Early Christians readily accepted Mary as the mother of Jesus, the man who was born, lived and died in Israel. After all, every human being has a mother. If Jesus was also God and Mary was his mother, then that logically made her the Mother of God. They even used the title "Theotokos", which literally means "God-bearer".

In the fifth century, theologians tried to explain how Jesus could be

both divine and human, immortal and mortal. If Jesus was truly God and truly human, was Mary, the human mother of Jesus, also the Mother of God? Was he one person or two inside the one body?

In 431 A.D. at the Council of Ephesus, the Church declared that Jesus was one person with a divine nature and a human nature. Mary didn't just give Jesus a human body; she gave birth to the whole person, Jesus, who was both God and man. That's why Mary is both the mother of the human Jesus and Mother of God.

**"Do not forget the three phrases: 'excuse me', 'thank you', and 'I am sorry'. If there are these three phrases in a family, in a family environment, then the family is fine."**

Pope Francis

Today: 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28 Monday: 1 John 1:1-4 Tuesday: 1 John 1:5 – 2:2 Wednesday: 1 John 2:3-11 (E): St Thomas Becket (Feast): Colossians 1:24-29; Thursday: 1 John 2:12-17 Friday: 1 John 2:18-21 Saturday: Numbers 6:22-27 Galatians 4:4-7 Luke 2:16-21 Next Sunday: Ecclesiasticus 24:1-2, 8-12 John 1:1-18 (S) Isaiah 60:1-6 Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6 Matthew 2:1-12