

Are you sitting comfortably?



Patsy McGregor *reflects on* Psalm 22:23-end and Mark 8:31-end

Have you ever found yourself in a difficult conversation? Today's Gospel exemplifies one. Uncomfortable with Jesus' unflinching clarity about the suffering and rejection he must face, Peter rebukes him. It must have been a heated discussion. Jesus turns around and returns the rebuke, calling Peter "Satan".

Then Jesus taught the crowd the cost of following him – forgetting self. Whoever wanted to save his own life would lose it; whoever lost his life for Christ and the Gospel would save it. It is amazing that Christianity spread after this. Would you have signed up?

It makes me wonder – is our generation ashamed of the Gospel? How often do we share personal stories of faith? Are we shy in telling people about Jesus? Perhaps we are caught in "recliner Christianity", attached to our home comforts, switching channels when we lose interest, turning entertainment on or off at leisure.

We need to be willing to get out of our comfort zone, out of the pews and into the world, serving the body of Christ and making a difference in the surrounding community.

Today's psalm is a promise. Future generations will serve God – they will speak of the Lord to the coming generation. Lent is a good time to practise discipline. One of those disciplines is to share our faith. Are you willing to get out of your comfortable chair? 🙏

Retirement *Choice and constraint*

by Julia McGuinness

"The sense of freedom is absolutely wonderful," said one delighted retiree. Being able to choose what we do, when and how we do it is a desirable retirement reward. But choice brings challenges. With so many tempting possibilities, how do we find focus to make the most of life without one day drifting into another? Conversely, how do we ensure we do not commit ourselves into over-busyness? Retirement freedom can be

encroached upon. Children may assume that grandparents are available for extended childcare, while friends and family may need significant support in one way or another. In addition there can be personal health challenges to face and financial circumstances may be limiting – there is no blueprint for retirement.

Freedom brings the challenge of setting boundaries and managing the constraints that are imposed upon us. Pastoral support for retirees will involve attentive listening to support their making faith-filled choices in the landscape in which they find themselves. 🙏

“ We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), French Jesuit priest, scientist, theologian, philosopher and teacher

Lord, I will declare your goodness, get out of my armchair and into the world. Your strength comes quickly to help and I will always trust in you. Amen.

Lent lunch – a place at the table

by Ricarda Witcombe

Whatever format a Lent lunch takes, it usually involves a table.

A table may be a piece of furniture you take for granted. Or it may be something you seldom use – perhaps you eat your meals on a tray, or perhaps you sit on the floor. It is a place of companionship, the means by which we eat together. It's the place where stuff is put – work, things that need sorting or

mending, food. And it's the place where space is made for others – think of the care with which a table is laid for a banquet. What would Jesus see if he sat at your table?

The table around which we gather at church is a place of invitation. It's the place from which Jesus says, come and be fed. There's a place for you here. It's what God prepares for his people in the wilderness – a table, in the midst of all that troubles us, where our cup overflows. 🙏