

SUNDAY PLUS

Chosen by God

A Year of the Word

Recognise the voice

by Mary Bell

When someone dies the thing we miss most, apart from not seeing them, is the sound of their voice. The voice is a significant part of who we are.

If you've ever rung a dead friend's phone and got the answerphone with their voice still on the recorded message it gives you quite a start. In the garden Mary Magdalene, grieving for Jesus and distraught at finding his tomb empty, only recognised the risen Lord when he spoke her name.

To the disciples mourning the loss of Jesus after the crucifixion, his appearance in the

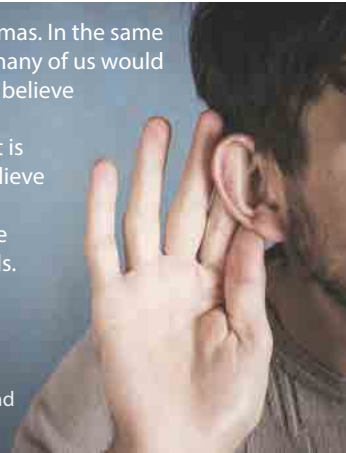
locked room became more real when he spoke to them. His "Peace be with you" could not have come at a more desperate time for them nor have been more welcome.

Poor Thomas, missing on this occasion, only reacted to the news of Jesus' appearance as anyone else would – sheer disbelief causing him to overstate his case about sticking fingers into wounds. His subsequent recognition of the Lord was made all the more poignant when Jesus told him to do just that and, of course, he needed only to hear Jesus' voice to believe.

These realistic details in the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus make them all the more convincing. Certainly we

sympathise with Thomas. In the same circumstances how many of us would have had the faith to believe in spite of not having seen? Yet that is what is expected of us: to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, risen from the dead to save our souls.

Mary Bell is a retired teacher, U3A lecturer and devoted grandmother.



It's okay to have doubts

by Paul Higginson

Everybody has doubts. No one should feel guilty or ashamed of doubt. It is part of being human. Like Thomas we often doubt what we cannot see and touch. Yet Jesus does not reject Thomas because of his unbelief. He comes back for him. Jesus continually comes back to us too, reminding us that he is on our side: he is rooting for us; he is in our corner. Although we can sometimes stop believing in him, he never stops believing in us.

If you, like Thomas, have doubts then the verse in 1 John 4:12 is worth remembering: "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." Through our love for each other we allow God to become real and tangible, thereby enabling him to make his home in us. In this way we become "blessed" because we have not seen, and yet believe.

Paul Higginson is the Assistant Principal at the Catholic Sixth Form College in Harrow and has been a parish catechist for thirty years.

Jesus, Mary recognised your voice when you spoke her name, and did so with love. That one word lifted her from the depths of despair to indescribable joy. Lord, there are so many people who long to hear someone use their name with love and compassion. Let them find the companionship and the support that they need. Amen.

From sadness to joy

by Emerald O'Hanrahan

When the risen Jesus found Mary, her joy must have been overwhelming.

When my dad was dying, I was working in a play, away on tour. The play started with a big, cheery song and dance number, and it was simultaneously the hardest thing to leave behind my guilt, terror and grief about Dad, and a huge relief to experience the lightness and positivity that belonged to the character I was playing. This familiar story that ended happily every night was a welcome relief – a forcing into joy at a really difficult time.

We are, of course, an Easter people and are constantly called from sadness to joy. Sometimes (often) it's a very tough call for me to answer: hopelessness can be so... sticky. I know, though, that when I do pay attention to these calls, and answer them, I grow more towards being the person God made me to be.

Emerald O'Hanrahan is an actress and voice-over artist, perhaps best known for playing Emma Grundy in *The Archers*.

"The first witnesses of the resurrection were women. And this is beautiful. This is part of the mission of women; of mothers, of women! Witnessing to their children, to their grandchildren, that Jesus is alive, is living, is risen. Mothers and women, carry on witnessing to this!"

Pope Francis

The Road to Emmaus and Beyond
A Journey from Easter to Pentecost
Denis McBride C.Ss.R.



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"If you pick up this book, be prepared to be stretched and challenged."

Today: Acts 2:42-47 1 Peter 1:3-9 John 20:19-31	Monday: Acts 4:23-31 John 3:1-8	Tuesday: Acts 4:32-37 John 3:7-15	Wednesday: Acts 5:17-26 John 3:16-21	Thursday: Acts 5:27-33 John 3:31-36	Thursday (E): St George (Solemnity): Apocalypse 12:10-12; John 15:18-21 or 15:1-8	Friday: Acts 5:34-42 John 6:1-15	Saturday: 1 Peter 5:5-14 Mark 16:15-20	Next Sunday: Acts 2:14, 22-33 1 Peter 1:17-21 Luke 24:13-35
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