



prepared to wash their feet. At first a horrified Peter tried to protest: "Never! You shall never wash my feet." But Jesus didn't give way. "If I do not wash your feet you can have no share with me," he said. Peter, being Peter, not only relented – he became passionate in his acceptance. Having then washed their feet, Jesus asked them: "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord and rightly; so I am. If I then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you" (John 13:13-15).

THE HEART OF CHARITY

Thus, Jesus explained what Christians look like: lowly servants carrying out acts of kindness that others disdain. When we complain about our empty churches, the turning away of our young people or the lack of respect shown to our religion we might think about this – about how we as individuals and as a community are acting this out. We might hear in those words of Jesus a call back to the heart of charity – and to the heart of our Christian life.

Give: Charity and the Art of Living Generously by Magnus Macfarlane-Barrow is published by William Collins, £16.99 hardback

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

After the Lord was baptised, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove, and the voice of the Father thundered: This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 55:1-11

PSALM Isaiah 12:2-6

RESPONSE With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

1. Truly, God is my salvation. I trust, I shall not fear. For the Lord is my strength, my song, he became my saviour. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. **R.**
2. Give thanks to the Lord, give praise to his name! Make his mighty deeds known to the peoples! Declare the greatness of his name. **R.**
3. Sing a psalm to the Lord for he has done glorious deeds, make them known to all the earth! People of Zion, sing and shout for joy for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. **R.**

SECOND READING: 1 John 5:1-9

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alléluia, alléluia! John saw Jesus coming towards him, and said: This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Alléluia!

GOSPEL Mark 1:7-11

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Behold the One of whom John said: I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.



Next Sunday's Readings:
1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19
1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20
John 1:35-42



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SUNDAY BULLETIN

THINKING FAITH

BLESSED AND BROKEN

In the days after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti I was staying with an American priest, Father Tom, amidst the ruins of his house. At the end of each working day his co-workers would present what they had salvaged from among the debris. One day they found a smashed crucifix. The mangled figure of Christ was missing parts of its plaster limbs and twisted bits of wire protruded from the snapped arms and legs. They hung it from a nail on the tree that had become our makeshift chapel. One evening, after we had prayed there, Father Tom explained to me that this crucifix had been a fixture in his family home as he grew up. Recognising its significance to him, I asked him if he might try to have it repaired. "You know, I actually like it just the way it is," he replied. "It reminds me that Jesus is broken too – with us."

THE GREATEST GIFT

His words prompted me to look at our crucified Christ in a new way. It helped me gaze on the crucified Lord as the one who will always give us the strength we need, in every circumstance, especially when we are most weak – especially when we feel broken. Here, we encounter God giving us God's only Son – God's beloved Son – the greatest gift that was ever given. With that final breath breathed in the darkness (although it was the middle of the day it became dark for three hours), Jesus completed the most beautiful and profound act of charity ever made. But even if we believe it – that Jesus died for us personally, offering us a gift so great and so undeserved – it can still be a very hard thing to accept. To accept even a small gift is an uncomfortable experience for many of us. To receive charity is very hard; often much more difficult than providing it for others. Even the thought of asking for help – or admitting to ourselves we need it – can be too much. How many people have died in despair because they could not say, "please help me"? Our egos seem to crave self-sufficiency, or at least the appearance of it, sometimes at all costs. But if we do not know how to receive, we do not know how to practise charity.



This in part was the lesson Jesus had taught his disciples at their Last Supper the previous evening. He scandalised them when he

Charity

and the

of living

generous



Today in *Sunday* we begin a series of articles adapted for his new book by Magnus Macfarlane-Barrow founder of Mar

10 JANUARY 2012

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK

redemptorist P U B L I C A T I O N S
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