

# realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



## In today's readings:

A kingdom of peace. Isaiah 11:1-10  
The gift of hope. Romans 15:4-9  
The call to change. Matthew 3:1-12

## Next week:

John asks Jesus a key question.  
Isaiah 35:1-6,10; James 5:7-10;  
Matthew 11:2-11.

## In a nutshell

In today's Gospel John the Baptist proclaims the coming of Jesus. The voice of this prophet resonates through the ages: Prepare your hearts for the gift of salvation! Align your life with the one who is Life! To bear witness to the reign of God we must be willing to change.



## Conversion point

'Why don't you lose weight?'  
'Stop pestering me, Ted.'  
'Aw, c'mon. I'm just joking. Don't look so glum.'

I offered a wry smile but on the inside I felt angry and hurt. This had been the pattern of our marriage for as long as I could remember, Ted needling me about my faults; me responding with irritation.

That was before Veronica walked into our lives. She came for dinner that first night we met her, the girlfriend of our eldest son, John. She seemed a lovely young woman and we all warmed to her as we shared the evening meal.

After the meal we left John and Veronica in the kitchen washing up while Ted and I finished clearing the table in the dining area. We both stopped as we overheard Veronica mention our names.

'You have wonderful parents John,' she said. 'I think your Mum is special. She is one of the most caring people I have ever met.'

'Dad's always wanting her to

change,' said John.

'Really?' said Veronica incredulously. 'Gosh, I don't understand that. Your Mum's the sort of woman I aspire to be!'

I glanced up at Ted who was looking out the window. For a moment we were both silent. Then Ted put the dishes down and walked away. I went to our bedroom, sat down and gathered my thoughts.

A few minutes later, Ted came in and sat beside me. 'I'm sorry Cathy,' he said in a husky voice. 'I guess I have never been so confronted by the truth. The fact is: *I'm* the one who has to change. Not you.' With his arms around me he said the words I had been aching to hear for years. 'Cathy, I love you. You are beautiful just as you are.'

## Positive choices

When I began working in a service station two days a week I was quite shocked by the rudeness and aggression of some customers. Resisting the inclination to give them the cashier-from-hell treatment, I made a conscious decision to respond to each one in a polite and friendly manner. It became a bit of game... Will I be able to get this next customer to smile or utter the word 'thanks'? After some weeks I noticed not only a small measure of success, but that I was enjoying work! (Max)

## Think...Talk

*The first place of change is the heart of each person.*

Describe one of the most significant changes you have made in your life. What led you to change?



## Creatures of habit

Why do people find it so hard to accept change? That's the question I came away with after another difficult meeting at work. Have you ever noticed that whenever change is introduced into an organisation, even change that is clearly necessary and for the good of employees and the company, people will grumble and focus on the negatives and potential pitfalls!

Having said that, we have one manager who is clearly different. He has a knack of breathing hope into every meeting. Frankly, I don't think we would get anywhere without him. I've watched him in action and I think his secret is to focus on people's strengths and the positive potential of any given situation. (Daniel)

## Pray...Act

Holy Spirit, help me to change for the better. Help me to see the log in my own eye before focusing on the splinter in the eye of my neighbour. Amen.



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