

# realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



## In today's readings:

Hospitality and holiness. 2 Kgs 4:8-11,14-16;  
From death to life. Rom 6:3-4,8-11;  
Strong words about the cross. Mt 10:37-42.

## Next week:

Jesus: I am gentle and humble of heart. Zech 9:9-10; Rom 8:9,11-13; Mt 11:25-30.

## In a nutshell

The challenging words and presence of Jesus created a crisis for people of his day. The gospel continues to unsettle people with its demands. Discipleship is a bond that has priority over every relationship. All life's choices must take their lead from Christ. The Christian life leads inevitably to the cross, but has priceless rewards.



## Following Christ

Anne Sheehan was born and baptised in 1907 in Kilkenny, Ireland. At an early age she suffered the devastating loss of both her parents and was reared by her aunt.

When she was nineteen, Anne responded to a call for volunteers to leave Ireland to become a Sister of Mercy in the far flung diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes. Nobody, except those who did it, can really understand what a sacrifice those young Irish women made, leaving their families and their homeland to give their all to the Church in Australia. They did so, never expecting to return to Ireland. The faith, energy and zeal of those Irish women has surely been gift beyond measure to the Church in Australia. It would be over forty years before Anne saw Ireland again.

With eighteen other girls Anne arrived in Australia on 26th January, 1926. She entered the convent in Parkes and was given the name of Sr Mary Gerard. Her profession took place in 1928. The motto she chose was 'God alone' which sums up the

deep relationship she had with God all her life.

Then began a ministry of forty plus years in the central west towns of Peak Hill, Parkes, Condobolin; the far west in Brewarrina, Bourke, Cobar, Broken Hill; down south to Deniliquin and in the Blue Mountains at Blackheath.

Sr Gerard was an extremely successful infants teacher for all those years. She had a deep affection for her children and their families and prepared hundreds for first Confession and first Communion. The ministry of visitation was dear to Sr Gerard's heart, and she was often found visiting the sick, the lonely and elderly long after she retired from school.

Sister Gerard died in 1998. In her final years one of the crosses she suffered was her deafness, but she never failed to respond to visitors with a beautiful smile.

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## The hard facts

*In his homily, a priest related the raw data of what it means for some people in the world to follow Christ:*

In April 1998 the Office of Human Rights of the Archdiocese of Guatemala (South America) spoke out against human rights abuses. Its four volume report included the names of persons chiefly responsible for over 25,000 people massacred, 4,000 people disappearing and 25,000 tortured, detained or ill-treated. Two days after the release of that report the Archbishop was murdered.



## Think . Talk . Act

As Christians in Australia, one of the dangers of living in a peaceful and affluent country like ours is that we become 'soft' and 'spoiled', out of touch with the demands of the cross which are so central to following Christ.

Reflect upon the stories of some of the courageous Christian witnesses and martyrs of our age. How do they teach, inspire and challenge you? What action will you take as a result?



**RealPeople** offers faith reflections from the saints and prophets of everyday life.

A publication of  
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