

## Bulletin 10 – The Sixth Sunday of Easter

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I eagerly watched the Address by the Prime Minister last Sunday evening, however, like many others I was left confused and disappointed. The statement left more questions than answers. During this week a greater sense of clarity has emerged as politicians, members of the media and others have teased out the implications of the “Road map”. There will be a gradual step by step emerging from the lockdown, with hoped for timings for different establishments, eg step 1 Parks and Golf clubs, step 2 schools and in step 3 places of worship.

The date that the Government are aiming to reach Step 3 is 4<sup>th</sup> July. As I said last week Deacon Michael and I have given much time and thought as to how it will work for us, social distancing is the biggest challenge. We have a small church building which, until the pandemic restrictions, was seeing a growing congregation at both Sunday masses. Deacon Michael with help from his wife Barbara, has rearranged the pews to protect the 2 metres apart rule, but this will only give us a capacity of 22 ‘individual persons’ at any one mass, however if you are in ‘groups of two or more’ then the numbers increase significantly as five or six from the same household can occupy a single pew. More details on this once we get permission to re-open from the Bishops. We do have large grounds so during the summer months there is no reason why we can’t have open air masses some Sundays! The other idea that we have been toying with is installing live streaming into our church, this will be useful in the meantime as most of you will be able to attend mass “virtually”, I know that some of you have found live streaming in other churches helpful during the lockdown, I too have wandered all over the British Isles watching mass, Adoration and Vespers, how wonderful it would be to worship together as a parish family again. The live streaming will continue to be of use to those who will have to continue to be shielded longer than others due to their own health requirements, and in the long term our Home Communicantes who miss not being able to come to mass will be able to continue to worship along with us.

Alongside this our bishops and others are working with the government seeking permission, to open our church buildings for personal prayer. There would have to be guidelines to follow, but surely it could be as safe on one’s daily walk to come into church to light a candle and pray for a while as it is to visit the supermarket or pharmacy.

As soon as we have any further information I will of course let you know. I continue to offer daily Mass for you and your intentions, do please continue to let me have any specific intentions for prayer and also if there are any practical issue we can help with.

God bless you all

Fr. John

Parish Priest

**Virtual Diocesan Pilgrimage to Walsingham** – Our annual Diocesan Pilgrimage to Walsingham was due to take place on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May but had to be cancelled due to the closure of places of worship as a result of Covid-19. However, thanks to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham's 24 hour livestream service we can still have a virtual pilgrimage by joining the services being livestreamed via the Shrine's website [www.walsingham.org.uk](http://www.walsingham.org.uk) on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May from 11am.

### **MASS INTENTIONS**

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> – Sixth Sunday of Easter – People of our Parish

Monday 18<sup>th</sup> – Easter feria – Jennifer Ryan (RIP)

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> – Easter feria - Jim Birchall (RIP)

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> – St Bernadine of Siena - Isabella MacDermott (RIP)

Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> – The Ascension of the Lord – People of our Parish

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> – Easter feria – John Hogan (RIP)

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> – Easter feria – Bishop Alan and our Diocese

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> – Seventh Sunday of Easter – People of our Parish

### **GOSPEL REFLECTION**

“I will not leave you orphans”

One of the casualties of modern life is families not sitting down and eating meals together. Fast food, take aways, and convenience meals seemed to have combined to create a culture of individualism where everyone has their own food preference at their own time. The advert for, I think it's “Diliveroo”, shows this plainly. One has pizza, another curry, another kebab, etc you get the picture, yet mealtimes are not just about feeding our bodies, they should also be about building our relationships. When we come together as a family or group of friends and share a meal together we share much more than food.

I guess one good thing to have come out of this nightmare virus is that we all have time to prepare and cook food, we have become a nation of bakers we are told, my neighbour certainly has! No need to rely on microwaves at the moment as chicken a la ping is off the menu. There is also much less food waste which again can't be a bad thing. So if someone has slaved away in the kitchen to prepare a fresh nutritious tasty meal we are duty bound to sit and enjoy it together. We talk, we tell each other about the things that matter, our worries, our fears and our hopes.

This is how things were in the past, and most religions have festivals and Holy Days that are marked by special meals. It was at one such meal, the Jewish Passover meal that Jesus chose to institute the sacrificial meal of the Eucharist. It is in the mass that Jesus is as really present with us as he was on that night before he died for us, and that sacrifice on Calvary is re-presented for us.

The event of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday evening is well documented by the evangelists Matthew, Mark and Luke. They tell us about Jesus transforming the bread and wine into his body and blood, but it is John who goes to great lengths to recall the

lengthy conversation Jesus had with his disciples during the meal. Indeed, John devotes five whole chapters to that conversation, which culminates in our being able to eavesdrop on Jesus praying to his Father, a prayer which centres on us all being “one”. This Sunday’s Gospel passage is part of the earlier conversation where we hear Jesus encouraging the disciples to enter into this relationship which he has with the Father. The key to our understanding will be the gift of the Spirit, who enables us to see what is going on. When we reflect on what we are being invited to consider, it is truly astonishing. We are being invited to dine with God and thereby share the very life of God. Just as it was through the Spirit that Christ was conceived by Mary and came among us, so now the Spirit will continue to make him present so that he may live in us; through the Eucharist we become the body of Christ.

When we receive Holy Communion, we are not just nurturing our own personal relationship with Christ and his Father; through the gift of the Eucharist we are able to recognise that it is an open invitation and so we are united with all our brothers and sisters who gather around the altar and indeed with those who have gone before us in the hope of eternal life. This reminds us of why devotion to Our Lady and the saints is so significant. Spend some time this week reflecting on the wonderful gift that is ours and how in the Eucharist we are also caught up in the promise of Jesus, made just before today’s Gospel passage and which we heard last Sunday: that he is going to prepare a place for us and that in his Father’s house there are many rooms.

## **A LETTER FROM BISHOP ALAN**

It is always a delight to meet couples celebrating many years of married life together at the Mass of Thanksgiving for Marriage and Family Life, as well as those at the beginning of this adventure. You won’t be surprised to know that we’ve taken the decision not to hold a Mass this year in July as originally planned, and I hope those who would have come this year will be able to come next year instead.

This week is National Marriage Week and I would like to take this opportunity to send my greetings to all married couples, especially those celebrating significant anniversaries this year, and all those who are preparing for marriage. We have recently celebrated the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, and the church is greatly enriched by all those who live the vocation to marriage, helping their spouse and their children on the path to heaven and revealing something of Christ’s love for his church through their own commitment to each other. You are all in my prayers, but most especially those who are experiencing illness and bereavement. I am also aware of the deep disappointment experienced by the many engaged couples who have had to postpone weddings or do not yet know how their weddings will be affected, and you too are in my prayers at this time of uncertainty.

Many families will be under a great deal of pressure with all the additional stresses associated with the pandemic, and sadly some relationships will be pushed to breaking point: please do not be afraid to seek help, or leave it too late – Marriage Care is one of a number of organisations offering remote access to marriage counselling, and in our own diocese the Brentwood Catholic Children’s Society continues to provide vital support to children and families who are experiencing difficulties. As Pope Francis

recently tweeted “The Family is the hope of the future. Let us pray especially for families facing serious difficulties: may Our Lord assist them.”

Yours in Christ and Mary,

+Alan, sm