

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY  
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**BULLETIN B 11 – 11TH FEBRUARY 2024  
THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

**Today is the World Day of Prayer for the Sick  
And there will be a Second Collection for  
The Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage of the Sick**

**Mgr Keith Newton**

We welcome the Ordinary as our Celebrant and Preacher this morning.

**Fr. Michael's Funeral**

On Thursday evening / Friday morning was a fitting tribute to a priest who had laboured long and hard in the Lord's vineyard. We continue to offer our prayers for his soul, that he who ministered here at God's altar, may be found a welcome at the liturgy in heaven.

**Arrangements for Lent**

**Lent Course** – this year we will be using a course “We Dare To Say” about the Our Father prayer, which has been recommended by the Bishops of England and Wales. The course which runs for 5 sessions will take place on Thursday during coffee after morning mass. It begins this week. Please sign the sheet at the door so we know how many booklets to produce.

**Silence** – During Lent it would be good to encourage each other to pray, especially before mass. Silence is a precious thing these days, let us all endeavour allow others the opportunity to pray. Speak to God before mass, and to your friends afterward. We shall also make more use of the silent moments during the mass itself.

**Adoration** – this will continue on Wednesdays after mass, but again silence is golden and so during Lent the Rosary will not be prayed publicly, there is nothing to stop you saying the Rosary, but quietly.

**Stations of the Cross** - Will be lead on some Fridays during Lent, please refer to the weekly bulletin for date and time.

**TIMES OF MASSES HERE THIS WEEK**

Sun	11	6 <sup>th</sup> in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	Jim Bridle (RIP) People of the Parish
Wed	14	Ash Wednesday	1000 Mass 1900 Mass	the Sick People of the Parish
Thu	15	feria of Lent	1000 Mass	King Charles III
Sun	18	First o Lent	1000 Solemn Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish

## GOSPEL REFLECTION

*The hospital movement began when Jesus welcomed lepers into his presence  
and said one word in Greek, which we translate as "I want to."*

Medieval pilgrimages led to the development of hospitals. Since people often made pilgrimages because they were unwell, they needed places to stay. So, hospital meant, literally, a place for guests, a word derived from the Latin "*hospes*", meaning "stranger" or "guest". The guest-house owners gradually developed considerable medical knowledge and practical ways of helping sick people to recover.

Christianity and health care have long been closely associated. The World Day for the Sick, which is celebrated today, was instituted in 1992 by Pope St John Paul II. He intended it to be "a special time of prayer and sharing, of offering one's suffering for the good of the Church and of reminding everyone to see in his sick brother or sister the face of Christ".

Appropriately, the World Day for the Sick is celebrated on the Feast Day of Our Lady of Lourdes, although this year it is not observed, as it falls on a Sunday. Nevertheless, it makes today a very good day for thinking and praying about healing and health care, and our Bible readings provide us with a focus.

The contrast between the passages from the Old and New Testaments is striking.

The "lepers" of the Bible were clearly people with severe skin disfigurements. Whether or not they suffered from leprosy, as "Hansen's disease", the Old Testament law about leprosy was a form of both exclusion and inclusion. At that time leprosy was thought to be highly contagious, so it was, in part, practical. If the skin condition was severe enough, according to the judgement of a priest, the leper was forced to live at the edge of the camp — not completely excluded but travelling on the periphery.

By contrast, in Mark's Gospel Jesus is "moved with pity" for the leper who approaches him, even reaching out to touch him. Then he says a word that we translate as the phrase "I want to."

Christianity didn't invent medicine, or even make great progress in finding cures, although inventive medieval monks and many Christians throughout history have contributed greatly to modern health care. Rather, Jesus brought sick people into the very heart of Christianity. The hospital is a work of Christ because it reverses the practice of excluding sick people and gathers them into a place of care.

Despite the very real risk of infection, the medieval hostellers kept caring for sick pilgrims, believing that to die in their service assured their own place in heaven. Today, the many Christians working in modern health care – and those who don't – make caring their business. Perhaps we should all take the word "carer" more literally because we are all involved in the business of caring.

So, what is the meaning of caring in this sense? Ways in which we can help include encouraging and praying for medical staff. But "carer" is not just a term for someone who works in health care. It is wider and deeper than that. A carer is anyone whose care is visible in their actions, which is the goal of every Christian. Through caring, we make our faith visible and share it with others. For what is truly in our heart will be truly in our actions.

As carers in this sense, we share our faith, although this doesn't mean trying to press it on other people. Our Lord and his disciples learned to go where they were invited. Evangelisation is always a response, never an imposition. We should trust that our faith is visible through our caring actions. We might say that we need to have faith about faith itself. Faith will find a way.

Like the original medieval hospitals, many places of care are also places of pilgrimage. Whatever help we can offer each other, life will end one day. No one is outside the care of God because God wishes to work through us. This is the message of Lourdes. Sick people are not to be excluded, but through care and compassion for them, we can bring about the healing of humankind.