

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY
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BULLETIN B 19 – 7TH APRIL 2024
SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

My Dear brothers and sisters,

What a wonderful Holy Time this Easter has been for us here at The Assumption. The church and hall had been cleaned, polished and decorated. All the services were well attended, indeed there were more at mass during the Triduum and on Easter Sunday than ever before, according to know records. Since the pandemic we have been slowly growing in numbers as well as in the faith. We still have a long way to grow but God is richly blessing us here in Old Harlow.

Fr. John

PS. Thank you all so much for the Easter Offering, again record breaking!

LITURGY AND WORSHIP THIS WEEK

Sun	7	2 nd Sunday of Easter	1000 Solemn Mass	People of the Parish
			1800 Mass	
Wed	10	Easter feria	1000 Mass	
			1020 Adoration	
Thu	11	St. Stanislaus	1000 Mass	
Sun	14	3 rd Sunday of Easter	1000 Solemn Mass	People of the Parish
			1800 Mass	

FINANCE COMMITTEE – Members please note there will be a short meeting on Tuesday 16th April at 6.30pm to review the 23/24 Accounts and to set the Budget for the coming year.

GOSPEL REFLECTION

A young woman, who looked very emaciated, sat every morning at the lamppost outside Warren Street tube station in London. She begged for a few coins in an old, rather battered, McDonald's cup. Wrapped up in an old blanket, she endured the cruel, cold wind which blew strongly between the tall buildings. Further down Tottenham Court Road, sleepers woke up from their restless sleep and stirred in their grubby sleeping bags with a few pieces of cardboard as their mattresses. Here and there, some had small tents which had been erected next to the shops to gain heat from the ventilation ducts.

Most people walked by the woman; some placed a few coins in her cup. Most days, James also passed by, not offering her any money, thinking that it would be misused, likely to be spent on alcohol or drugs. One day he gave her one pound. A few days later he did the same again and she asked, "Can you buy me a cup of coffee please?" Stirred by her pathetic face and her pleading question, he said "yes" and went into McDonald's. Not having visited McDonald's for years, he was now confronted with screens for placing an order and little human contact. Negotiating this, he walked out and gave the coffee to the young woman. "What is your name?", he asked. "Tina", she replied. The woman by the lamppost was afterwards always "Tina" and not just another anonymous face. He began to think more about her. The pattern repeated a few times and then she disappeared. He wondered, "What happened to Tina, is she dead or alive?"

Thomas struggled to believe in Jesus, risen from the dead and the new life which he offered him. But Thomas' doubt was even stronger, he was stubborn, he and said, "Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my fingers in the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe". He made demands of Jesus and the other apostles. Thomas was arrogant. It must have been a struggle to stay with those who believed and were full of joy. Now he found himself on the margins.

God relentlessly pursues those who try to escape from him, never abandoning them, and protecting them unceasingly under the shade of his outstretched hand. The risen Jesus seeks Thomas out to speak to him and prove that he is risen from the dead. He appears to Thomas and invites him to do exactly what he has demanded. Thomas touches the wounds of the risen Jesus and says, "My Lord and my God". He believes.

We belong to the Body of Christ through baptism. This is not an abstract reality but real, earthy, and fleshy. We meet Christ when we love our brothers and sisters as neighbours. St Francis of Assisi, leaving his rich life behind, despised lepers in general. But when he kissed one leper whom he met on the road to Assisi, his bitterness was changed to sweetness. St Francis recognised him as having the same dignity as one of God's children.

We do not see the risen Christ directly like Thomas and the others to whom he appeared for forty days. Rather we meet the risen Christ through prayer, his Word, the sacraments, and other people. We walk by faith and not by sight. We rejoice in being those people of whom Jesus says, "Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe."

James meeting Tina, buying her a cup of coffee, knowing her name, was a meeting with Christ. It deepened his faith. He began to understand more deeply the meaning of Christ's Body on earth. This meeting began to build a relationship between two people, between whom there had existed a great gulf.

Actions speak louder than words. Many people find Christian outreach to the poor and the vulnerable, to the hungry and the needy, credible as a witness to the Gospel of Christ. This is the reason why St Francis of Assisi is loved by many people. Whilst not everyone is called to his radical way of life, we must each ask how we can live more simply and more generously towards others.

Just as the apostles testified to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power and were given great respect, so this parish community witnesses to the power of belief in Christ by touching the wounds of Christ in our own here and now.

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St John Vianney, Clayhall, is holding an afternoon of Divine Mercy Devotion on Divine Mercy Sunday, 7 April 2024. Starting at 1pm and ending with Mass at 5pm, it will comprise Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, recitation of St Faustina's Praises, the Litany of the Divine Mercy, the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy and the Holy Rosary, prayers and time for Confession. Refreshments will be available. All are welcome at St John Vianney Catholic Church, 1 Stoneleigh Road, Clayhall IG5 0HE. Parking available, nearest TfL station Gants Hill, buses 123 and 179 pass nearby, also bus 462 slightly further away.

You are invited to the 2024 Caritas Brentwood Networking Day, Saturday 27th April, 10am – 2.30pm, at the St Edward the Confessor Church Hall, Romford. If you are interested in the Catholic response to homelessness, the Cost of Living Crisis, mental health and well-being, welcoming refugees and migrants or the causes and effects of climate change, then this is a chance to be sustained, share ideas and good practices with people from parishes across Essex and East London and hear about charities and resources available. Details and free registration are at www.caritasbrentwood.org/network

'BISHOP ALAN LISTENS' RESEARCH REPORT Understanding why Catholics in the Diocese of Brentwood no longer come to Church Last summer Bishop Alan invited Catholics who no longer regularly come to Church to get in touch so that he could seriously listen to their stories and experiences and begin to understand why so many Catholics no longer feel as though they belong in the Church.

This report presents a moving and challenging insight into how our Church and the covid-19 pandemic have contributed to a movement away from a regular practice of faith for many Catholics and offers our Church a rich repository of wisdom that might enhance and inform our ongoing journey of renewal in the diocese.

Thank you to all those who so generously and thoughtfully participated in this research. Please share this link/report with those whom you know have participated in this research. Go to the home page of <http://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/> to see the responses of hundreds of Catholics across our diocese and hear what Bishop Alan heard.