

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY
Old Harlow, Essex CM17 0HA
01279 434203
www.catholicchurchoftheassumption.co.uk

BULLETIN B 20 – 14TH APRIL 2024
THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

My Dear brothers and sisters,

Today's Gospel shows us that Jesus sees our loveliness before he sees our brokenness. He can heal the cracks and flaws which we try to hide even from ourselves.

Fr. John

LITURGY AND WORSHIP THIS WEEK

Sun	14	3 rd Sunday of Easter	1000 Solemn Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish
Wed	17	Easter feria	1000 Mass 1020 Adoration	
Thu	18	Easter feria	1000 Mass	
Sun	21	4 th Sunday of Easter	1000 Solemn Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish

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

It's beautiful and broken. Using stones and fire as their tools, Ancient Egyptians created the huge, 1200-ton, granite monument, now known as the Unfinished Obelisk. Before its completion, the huge stone, bigger than Cleopatra's Needle in London, broke, and 7–10 years of hard work were abandoned. How did the workmen feel? Had they wasted their time in Aswan or did they just shrug their shoulders and move to the next project, unaware that, 3500 years later, visitors from across the world would marvel at their achievements? Aswan's granite quarry had supplied many Ancient Egyptian monuments, but centuries of labour were almost forgotten as desert sand covered the site. The Unfinished Obelisk was only discovered in 2005 because someone wanted to build a house and, in laying the foundations, found previously unsuspected and immensely important archaeology. As a result, the hot, back-breaking work of our anonymous ancient ancestors now enriches modern lives in ways that they could never have imagined. The broken stone is a beautiful, living witness to commitment, skill and perseverance despite hardship. Its very brokenness was also its healing.

Today's Gospel opens in the Upper Room. The two disciples who met Jesus at Emmaus tell their companions – who were still in hiding – the good news of Jesus' resurrection. One of the Emmaus returnees, Cleophas, was apparently St Joseph's brother. So why, on Good Friday, was he missing from his nephew's crucifixion and his sister-in-law's side? Why did his wife stand with Mary at the foot of the cross and help with Jesus' burial – and he didn't? Why did he and another disciple head off to Emmaus, leaving his wife and the other women to complete their heartbreaking anointing of Jesus' body? Was he embarrassed? Did he feel guilty? Was he too upset – but what about the care he should have shown – and apparently didn't – towards Mary, the mother of Jesus?

Most of today's Gospel focuses on Jesus' unexpected visit. The disciples had fled from Jesus in his hour of greatest need. Afraid for their own safety, they ran away. They didn't visit Jesus' tomb, but instead hid in shared grief, fear and shame. They knew their cowardice and betrayal. When the women returned from Calvary and the tomb, did they voice their opinions of the men's behaviour, or did they find them too crushed to need to say anything? When Jesus appeared in their midst, the disciples thought they saw a ghost. They deserved his anger but he didn't criticise them or make them feel any worse than they already did. He didn't condemn their weakness or highlight the women's courage. Instead, Jesus surprised them with a greeting of peace and a request for food. Their brokenness wasn't terminal. Jesus started the healing process.

Throughout Jesus' public ministry, he nurtured his disciples, giving of himself in ways beyond their understanding and expectations. His followers often muddled along, following Jesus because they recognised that, in their limitations, they needed him. Following Good Friday, the disciples felt broken, but they couldn't turn back the clock and undo the flaws they had discovered in themselves. Jesus had died and they had done nothing to protect him.

But we're like that, aren't we? It's easier to see our brokenness than our loveliness and yet, to Jesus, it's that loveliness which he sees first. He knows the cracks that we try to hide even from ourselves, knows that they can hold the clue to recovery and wholeness. The ancient Egyptians working on the huge obelisk didn't see the tiny cracks which would eventually grow and potentially destroy their efforts. Yet those cracks would highlight something beautiful: brokenness needn't destroy. New and unimagined beginnings are possible.

Someone who is unaware of their own imperfections doesn't learn from experience and can be very insensitive towards others. Their brokenness cannot be healed because they can't see the flaws – and so small cracks grow bigger. Some of the world's most beautiful people are those who have learned humility, compassion and understanding through their own difficult experiences. Their struggles have opened their eyes and hearts to the goodness in others. They have room for growth. There's room for Jesus.

The disciples were very different people after meeting the post-resurrection Jesus. He offered them the possibility of a fresh start and so they started to grow through their weaknesses. Their brokenness became something beautiful and a lasting example of healing and new beginnings. Jesus' invitation to his disciples is offered to us. Let's celebrate our own brokenness and the loveliness which Jesus can repair and make even more beautiful.

+++++

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 <https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/> to see the responses of hundreds of Catholics across our diocese and hear what Bishop Alan heard.