

BULLETIN 24 – 21ST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have heard this week that we will soon be able to use and also let out our Church Hall. There will be conditions to follow to be compliant with Covid 19 procedures, but its good news. The Hall is important to us not just for our own parish use, but also as a regular source of income. As soon as the Health and Safety department in Cathedral House have produced the necessary check list procedures then Deacon Michael, who's excellent at these things, will produce our risk assessment.

I must say that last weekend was fantastic, Our Feast of Title – The Assumption of Our Lady was celebrated with simplicity as befits the current restrictions, but there was Joy and a real sense of worship. I am grateful to all those who sent Birthday Greetings and gifts to me and I very much enjoyed my first birthday in the parish.

God Bless you all

Fr. John

OUR WORSHIP THIS WEEK

Sun 23 - 21 of the Year	1000 Mass	Birchall Family & Friends (RIP)
Tue 25 - St. Louis	1030 Rosary	
Wed 26 – feria	1000 Mass	Betty Murthy (RIP)
Thu 27 – St. Monica	1000 Mass	Eleanor Jago (RIP)
	1020 Adoration	
Fri 28 – St. Augustine	1000 Mass	Gloria Birchall (RIP)
	1020 Stations	
Sun 30 – 22 of the Year	1000 Mass	People of the Parish
	1800 Mass	Alfred & Emma Corbyn (RIP)

GOSPEL REFLECTION

“Who do you say I am?”

The priest got up into the pulpit and began delivering his homily on “distraction at prayer” and how it can manifest itself. He told the congregation about a woman, whom he actually knew quite well, who got up during his sermon one Sunday and with a fair amount of embarrassment quickly left the church. The priest went on to say that this happened because she was distracted by something. He met the woman later on that week in the street, and she began to apologise, saying, “Oh Father, I am sorry that I had to leave the church during your homily, and they are always very good anyway, but I had the terrible thought that I had left the oven on, so I had to return home immediately.” The priest concluded by saying, “And that, my brothers and sisters, is distraction at prayer.”

Sitting in the church was little Samantha, aged eight years old. She put her hand up and, when the priest saw this, he asked, "Have you a question?" To which Samantha said, with no hesitation or embarrassment, "Instead of being a distraction, could it not have been God telling the woman to go home, because the oven would catch fire, her house would burn down and she and her children would have nowhere to stay?" Out of the mouths of babes and children, we might say. We always need to be open to new ways of looking at things and listening to new voices.

Matthew tells us in today's Gospel that Simon Peter replied to Jesus' question without hesitation, fear or doubt. After the previous answers given by the disciples were passed over by Jesus, it might have been understandable if Simon Peter had been reticent with his answer. We might well imagine the apostle needing time to think about the answer to this most direct and personal question posed by Jesus, "But you... who do *you* say that I am?" But, according to Matthew's account, Simon Peter simply "spoke up" and responded immediately, and he calmly and with utter certainty said, "You are the Christ... the Son of the living God."

The statement, or more properly the proclamation made by Peter, is a strong one and some of his friends and contemporaries might well have been taken aback. It would seem that Peter had truly been inspired and this inspiration could not and must not be kept hidden or remain silent. Now that it was out in the open, Jesus responded, telling Simon, son of Jonah, how blessed he was. In this Gospel we see the crowning glory being given by Jesus to Peter: the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Peter is entrusted by the Lord to receive authority that is beyond his imagination, the authority that has been passed from one generation to another, down to this present age.

When we find ourselves being asked deeply personal questions, sometimes we can feel like we are being pushed into a corner with little space for moving. Religion is one of those areas where many of us can feel at sea when questioned too closely by others. We think we have a right to privacy and no one should ever ask us about our religious beliefs. And so we can thank God today for Peter's insight and for his courage in speaking up.

Today's Gospel passage can embolden us and empower us never to lose our nerve in speaking about our faith. We are the modern-day disciples of Jesus, we have the same mandate as the first disciples, and if we do not act or speak as people of Jesus, who will?

The English writer and philosopher G.K. Chesterton once said, "If there were no God, there would be no atheists." We live in a world in which it's all too easy to feel embarrassed or hesitant to speak up about our faith. As followers of Jesus, we are called never to feel intimidated to announce the message of Jesus, because God knows how much it is needed today. If we, each in our own way, pronounce peace, or joy, or love, or justice, then the world will be a more loving, joyful, peace-filled and just place. That is the simplicity and the power of proclaiming Jesus today.