

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY

Old Harlow, Essex CM17 0HA

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BULLETIN A 52 – 19TH NOVEMBER 2023 THE 33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

My dear brothers and sisters,

On Tuesday this week there will be the Annual Requiem Mass for the departed priests of the Diocese. Each year the priests of the Deanery gather here for this mass, all are very welcome to join us.

Next Sunday, the last in the Church's year, in the Feast of Christ The King, it is also National Youth Sunday. We thank God and pray for our Youth Service thank is a great support to our young people. The BCYS, the youth service in Brentwood Diocese is an excellent local organisation, there will be a retiring collect next Sunday to help them continue this ministry.

God bless
Fr. John

TIMES OF MASSES

Sun	19	33 rd Ordinary Time	1000 Solemn Mass 1800 Mass	Isabel Doig (INT) People of the Parish
Tue	21	Presentation BVM	1100 Mass	RIP Priests of Diocese
Wed	22	St. Cecilia	1000 Mass 1020 Adoration	Our Choir (INT)
Thu	23	St Clement	1000 Mass	Elsie Harrington (RIP)
Sun	26	Christ the King	1000 Solemn Mass 1800 Mass	Thalia Gatto (INT) People of the Parish

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Fr. John will be available to hear confessions by appointment only this week

Silent Weekend Retreat 'Be Still My Soul'. Fri 8th - Sun 10th December 2023.

Organised by Allegra Mutanda. Venue: Sion Community, Brentwood. Our theme focuses on the need to learnt the 'art' of being still and at rest in the midst of a busy and noisy society. Guest speaker: Grace Nowakowska, full-time lay missionary member of Sion Community. This silent weekend retreat during Advent offers us the opportunity to spend time with the Lord in quiet prayer and reflection. 40-HOURS of CONTINUOUS Adoration, spiritual guidance & prayer ministry included. For more information or to book, visit <https://sioncommunity.org.uk/adults/> or email allegra.mutanda@gmail.com

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Britain's Got Talent is one of the most popular TV shows on UK screens. People love to watch ordinary people like themselves with a gift for singing or dancing, or whatever it is, getting an opportunity to shine. There's the knuckle-biting moment when the judges get to say what they think, and there are many tears and disappointments as well as cheers and congratulations. Many of us would rather die than put ourselves through that kind of tension and public exposure – we couldn't bear the humiliation of failure. But often the judges are encouraging, even when they can't give an act their full approval. Every once in a while, there is an iconic moment when someone quite unexpectedly turns out to have star quality, like the first audition of singer Susan Boyle, who received a standing ovation for her performance of the song "I Dreamed a Dream".

God also dreams a dream, of each one of us becoming fully the person we were made to be. That dream and desire of God is revealed to us in the deepest desires that we have for ourselves. Every day we are faced with greater or smaller choices to grow or to stagnate, to flourish or to wither. We may not enjoy all the opportunities that others seem to have, but every conversation, every human encounter, presents us with a choice either to be more or to be less fully human. That choice is entirely ours.

Today's Gospel parable falls into two quite definite parts. Most people find the first part encouraging – we like the idea of the master giving talents to his servants and seeing what they can do with what they are given. We can resonate from our own experience with the idea of making something of what we have in our professional as well as our personal lives.

The second part of the parable is far more problematic. Who has never had a feeling of lack of confidence in themselves? We may remember with a shudder when we had to try something out for the first time or step up to a demand that was made of us. It's always worse if we have an audience, for that increases our fear of failure. Imposter syndrome is the name given to the fear many people have of others finding out that, for all their apparent calm and competence, they actually haven't a clue what they are doing.

Jesus makes clear that failure is not the problem, and nor is lack of talent. Not all of us are made to be superstars. But the worst we can do is to mistrust God at work in ourselves. This ties God's hands, as it were, and makes it impossible for God's grace to flourish in us. It's a daily task to believe that what we have and who we are is enough. The more we believe this, the more capable we become of responding to the gift and grace that lies within every moment. Ours may be a "quiet" talent – the gift of being a good listener, for example, or the gift of always being ready with an appreciative or encouraging word. This will not bring us standing ovations or bouquets on the world stage, but it will be the fulfilment of God's dream for us. Confidence grows confidence, but mistrust grows mistrust. That is the meaning of the devastating punchline of Jesus' parable, and it is meant to shock us.

One of the great spiritual teachings of St Ignatius of Loyola is called the Examen. It's not so much an examination of conscience in the sense of recalling our daily faults. It's more an examination of consciousness, a learning to be aware of how God, on a daily basis, is at work in the world and in our own lives. We learn to see our day from God's point of view and come to realise how many opportunities we are given to respond to grace. The more attuned we become to the gentle touch of God throughout the day, the more our personal gifts and talents and God's invitations become clear. This is a free choice which we can take or leave, but if we take it, it leads to life more abundant. Who could say no to that?