

# BULLETIN B 10 – 31<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2021

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This week sees the feast of The Presentation of the Lord, Candlemas. On this day we remember how Mary and Joseph took the baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to offer thanksgiving to Almighty God for the gift of their child and to dedicate him to God, his Father. This day is the traditional end to the Christmas period. Candles are blessed and given to the people for them to rejoice in the light who came to enlighten the nations, as the old man Simeon proclaimed in the gospel passage for the day. Anna an elderly lady who went into the temple every day was also privileged to witness the coming of the Lord into His Temple. Here at The Assumption of Our Lady we shall have Mass at 7.00pm with the blessing and distribution of candles, not sadly as solemn a celebration as in the past, but together we will celebrate the coming of the Light of Christ into our hearts and homes.

Candlemas leads us to our preparations for Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> February. Amongst the additional elements of Lent, Deacon Michael is keen to restart the Bible Study, this will happen each week of Lent and we hope to be able to Zoom the Study Group, thus enabling those with the technology to join the group from the warmth and comfort of their own homes. I might say that I attended my second Zoom meeting today, and was amazed at how easy it was, even for a technophobe like me. Please let Deacon Michael know if you would like to join the group and he will help you to get started.

During Lent we will also restart Stations of the Cross on Fridays. As soon as we are able I will restart the 6.00pm Mass on Sundays.

God Bless you all

Fr. John

### TIMES OF MASSES AND ADORATION THIS WEEK

|     |    |                                  |                |                      |
|-----|----|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Sun | 31 | 4 <sup>th</sup> in Ordinary Time | 1000 Mass      | People of the Parish |
| Tue | 2  | Presentation of the Lord         | 1900 Mass      | Nora Green (RIP)     |
| Wed | 3  | St. Anne Lime                    | 1000 Mass      | Monica Hogan (INT)   |
|     |    |                                  | 1020 Adoration |                      |
| Thu | 4  | feria                            | 1000 Mass      | Maureen Potter (INT) |
|     |    |                                  | 1020 Adoration |                      |
| Fri | 5  | St. Agatha                       | 1000 Mass      | John Hogan (RIP)     |
| Sun | 7  | 5 <sup>th</sup> in Ordinary Time | 1000 Mass      | People of the Parish |

### GOSPEL REFLECTION

“And his reputation rapidly spread everywhere”: that is how today’s Gospel ends, but it is by no means the end of the story; Jesus’ reputation has continued to spread for the past two thousand years and across all the continents. There are countless souls whose lives he has touched and, in some cases, transformed totally; millions upon millions of ordinary people – people like you and me – who have, to a greater or lesser extent, come to know and love him.

In 1991 the British boxer Michael Watson was left permanently paralysed after a bout with Chris Eubank. The brain surgeon who conducted the initial operation on Michael thought he would die; later, the doctors said that he would never walk again. But twelve years later he managed to complete the London Marathon; he walked it at the rate of two hours each morning and two hours each afternoon, finally completing the whole course in six days. He was accompanied on the last leg of his marathon by the man who had brought disaster into his life; they’d become good friends.

Indeed, Watson eventually wondered if it had been a disaster after all. “Getting angry”, he said, “won’t change the past. Before the accident I wasn’t a Christian. Now Jesus is my inspiration. How can you fail to be moved by the words of Jesus on the cross: ‘Father, forgive them’?”

The Jewish people revered Moses; they looked upon him as the greatest of their prophets, the greatest of God’s spokespeople, but as we heard in today’s first reading, Moses promised: “Your God will raise up for you a prophet like myself, from among yourselves.” That was the promise; the Gospel in dramatic fashion shows its fulfilment.

It’s the sabbath day; in the local synagogue Jesus is invited to preach. The people are deeply impressed. In their astonishment, they ask each other what it can all mean. Jesus is a prophet like no other; his teaching is teaching with a difference: for he teaches with authority. Other religious leaders simply pass on what they’ve learned from others, but Jesus’ teaching seems to well up from within himself. And he displays this authority not only in his words but also in his actions: he puts unclean spirits, devils, to flight. It’s been said that in Mark’s Gospel Jesus does not merely appear on the scene, he explodes onto it. His appearance is dramatic. Who can ignore a man like this? Indeed, who is he? Where does his power come from?

So Mark’s Gospel isn’t only a drama: it’s a challenge. What do I make of Jesus Christ? Who is he for me? Who is he, not just in theory but in practice; not just on Sundays but in the living of my daily life? And what about evil spirits? Did Jesus come to conquer them? In our modern, scientific world, we perhaps smile a little at the very mention of such beings. But are there not evil forces in each of us, forces that threaten our well-being and that of others, dark forces like pride, selfishness, lust, envy and bitterness that can so easily come bubbling up to the surface? And might not these be described as evil spirits? And then on the world stage, too: if we think of wars, crimes, ethnic cleansings, terrorism, the use of torture, and global warming caused by human misuse of the world’s resources – we might ask what drives human beings to do these things.

If today’s Gospel highlights the authority of Christ’s teaching, it is perhaps not surprising that the responsorial psalm should urge us to “listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts.” And if we listen, what shall we hear? Many things, but it will all come down to this: your God loves you, you are God’s child; God has prepared a place for you in God’s kingdom. Do not be afraid, God can conquer every evil that threatens your happiness. Live for God and for your sisters and brothers. When the people in the synagogue heard Jesus preach, they said: “Here is a teaching that is new.” And when we truly listen to him – not merely with our ears but our hearts – then his teaching is always new, always carrying an appeal and a freshness, as though we were hearing it for the first time. It is always Gospel, always good news.

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