

BULLETIN B 12 – 14TH FEBRUARY 2021 THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

Lent begins this week, on Ash Wednesday there will be two opportunities for mass in our parish; 10.00am and 7.00pm. The blessed ashes will be administered in a Covid secure manner, using cotton buds, please follow the directions of the stewards.

Next Sunday the First in Lent we shall hear how Our Lord at the beginning of his earthly ministry goes in to the wilderness to fast and pray. The Church encourages us to imitate her Lord in fasting, practicing acts of self-denial and together with a renewed prayer life (last week's Bulletin) and Charitable Giving (next week's issue) we continue to grow more like Jesus. The more we imitate Jesus the more we grow in our likeness to him.

The 6.00pm Mass will be reinstated from next Sunday, please spread the word. Also during Lent Stations of the Cross will be after the 10.00am Mass on Fridays.

Finally I would like to say how grateful I am for the response to our emergency boiler appeal, we have almost reached our target and the new boiler has been paid for, many thanks to all who helped.

With my Love and Prayers for a Holy Lent

Fr. John.

TIMES OF MASS AND OTHER SERVICES THIS WEEK

Sun	14	6 th in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass	People of the Parish
Tue	16	feria (Shrove Tue)	1900 Mass	Kay Hill (RIP)
Wed	17	Ash Wednesday	1000 Mass	People of the Parish
			1030 Adoration	
Thu	18	feria of Lent	1900 Mass	Gerald & Mary Birchall
			1000 Mass	John Hogan
			1020 Adoration	
Fri	19	feria of Lent	1000 Mass	Keith Alder Barber (RIP)
			1030 Stations	
Sun	21	First in Lent	1000 Mass	June Warner (RIP)
			1900 Mass	People of the Parish

TIMES OF CONFESSIONS THIS WEEK

Tuesday 6.30pm Wednesday 1030am Thursday 1030am Sunday 9.30am

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Few of us knew the fear of touching or being touched by an unclean person until the onset of the coronavirus in early 2020. One moment we were all willing to be herded into buses, planes or crowded cinemas or restaurants together, sharing sitting and breathing spaces, up close and personal. Then almost overnight, it seemed, other people became a dangerous enemy, potential disease-carriers, and killers unawares. New concepts came into common vocabulary like social distancing, and in the lockdown that followed, we sheltered in homes that became fortresses, wary of coming too close to one another, with the safe distance marked out in supermarket queues and other places of unavoidable contact.

These fears would have been familiar in Jesus' time, when contact with a person who had a skin disease meant inevitable contamination, either physical or ritual. The diseased other was a person of dread and fear in an era with few reliable medical remedies. You stayed clean or you died, simple as that. Small wonder, then, that the man with a skin disease is doubtful about Jesus' willingness to come near him. Yet he also has faith that God can work a gift of healing through him, "If you want to... you can cure me." Jesus feels compassion for him and does completely the opposite of what makes sense. Anyone with a knowledge of contagion would shrink from a person so obviously

diseased, but Jesus actively goes towards him and stretches out his hand to reach him. “Of course I want to!” It’s the opposite of the survival instinct. Jesus is willing to go into the darkest and most fearful places that human beings can find themselves in. There are no “no go” areas for Jesus, not even death itself. He is willing to come into the memories and experiences that we most deeply wish to hide from in order to free us from the darkness that they contain.

We don’t only fear physical contagion. For many people there is an instinctive shrinking away from whoever is thought to be “other”, whether it be in cultural terms or in terms of morality and lifestyle. It’s as if we fear that we will be contaminated by a different way of thinking or behaving. It’s so much easier to judge and to erect barriers: them and us, insiders and outsiders, the virtuous and sinners. Jesus tells some powerful stories about this, for example the Pharisee praying, “I thank you, God that I am not like other people...” In St Paul’s time it was common for formerly Jewish Christians to worry about mixing with pagans in the new Christian community. Paul tries to be culturally sensitive. He doesn’t want to impose burdens on the conscience of others. But he also stresses the freedom of the children of God.

It is not for us to stand in judgement on one another, but to mirror the welcome of Jesus even for those whose beliefs or practices we find strange or shocking. This isn’t to say, “Anything goes”. But it is to proclaim the Christian belief that everyone can find a home in the family of Jesus. Our first task is to keep the door to this family home wide open, to make space for others to enter in God’s own time and way, however “other” they may seem to us. Pope Francis teaches this powerfully in *Evangelii Gaudium*, “The Joy of the Gospel”, where he reminds us that the Eucharist is “not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak”. He goes on, “the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems”.

It is not for us to judge, but to recognise our own sinfulness and to offer the same welcome and compassion that we hope to receive ourselves. That is why forgiveness is at the heart of the prayer Jesus taught us. He puts the grace of forgiving and being forgiven alongside daily survival itself. Daily bread and daily forgiveness are his recipe for spiritual health, but the choice is ours. It is easy to highlight the faults of others, while we can be blind to our own sinfulness. At the heart of Jesus’ teaching is mercy and compassion: he is willing to heal us of all our darkness, but are we willing to open up that darkness to his healing touch? And are we willing to become healers in our turn?

PRAYERS FOR LENT

O gracious Master, infuse in our hearts the spotless light of Your Divine Wisdom and open the eyes of our mind that we may understand the teachings of Your Gospel. Instil in us also the fear of your blessed commandments, so that having curbed all carnal desires, we may lead a spiritual life, both thinking and doing everything to please You. For You, O Christ, our God, are the enlightenment of our souls and bodies; and to You we render glory, together with Your eternal Father, and with Your all holy, life-creating Spirit, now and ever, Amen

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Amen

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY

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