

BULLETIN B 13 – 21ST FEBRUARY 2021

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have now begun our solemn season of Lent; as we strive to follow Our Lord Jesus a little more closely in this 40 days of Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. In the previous two Bulletins I have talked about Prayer and Fasting in Lent, this week it's the turn of Almsgiving to be highlighted. During Lent above all times we should reassess our Charitable Giving. I know only too well, looking at our own parish finances, that all charities have suffered a decline in their income from donations. I urge you therefore to think really hard about supporting your usual charities, or adopting a new one.

The Friday of the first week of Lent is always designated as a Lent Fast Day, and in our Diocese it is usual to support the work of Cafod. This year Cafod are highlighting the need for clean water for areas of our world, where water is a precious rare commodity. They tell of one man, Abdella, and his struggle to provide water for his family. Abdella lives in an extremely remote and mountainous region of Ethiopia – one of the hottest places on the surface of the planet. Refreshing water is a long way away, a ten hour round trip on foot. Abdella tells us: "The journey for water is so long we have to leave early from the village while it is still dark. I feel tired, I feel hungry. It is very boring. It is hard but I have no choice. "I walk through the [dried out] riverbed, then climb into the mountains, then down into a valley, then climb another mountain to finally get to the water."

We must keep Abdella and those like him in our prayers. Sadly, there are millions like him. One in three people globally do not have access to safe drinking water. But with your support this Lent we can reach out and make a powerful difference. Through CAFOD, you can provide boreholes and solar powered water pumps to remote communities. You can make sure people no longer have to spend all their time collecting water, so they can concentrate on making their hopes a reality.

This Friday will you deny yourself some food and donate the money you save to Cafod? There will be envelopes for you donation as you leave Church this week, they can be returned next week, a bucket will be available for your envelopes next Sunday.

God Bless you in your Lenten efforts.

Fr. John

SCHEDULE OF MASSES AND OTHER SERVICES THIS WEEK

Sun	21	1 st in Lent	1000 Mass	June Warner (RIP)
			1800 Mass	People of the Parish
Tue	23	feria of lent	1900 Mass	Jim Birchall (RIP)
Wed	24	feria of lent	1000 Mass	John Clarke (RIP)
			1025 Adoration	
Thu	25	feria of lent	1000 Mass	Ronald Parker (RIP)
			1025 Adoration	
Fri	26	feria of lent	1000 Mass	Nora Green (RIP)
			1025 Stations of the Cross	
Sun	28	2 nd in Lent	1000 Mass	People of the Parish
			1800 Mass	John Hogan (RIP)

GOSPEL REFLECTION

It was around a year ago, during Lent, that many of us entered a sort of wilderness as we began the experience of lockdown, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our ways of communication changed significantly. The things we took for granted – communicating with handshakes, hugs and kisses, gatherings with family and friends around the dinner table, worshipping together in church buildings – were replaced for many people by virtual meetings and group discussions using social media and smartphones.

As we become more reliant on such devices, we've probably had to become acquainted with the language that accompanies them: for example, "restore factory settings" – whereby phones and other computing devices are calibrated to their original settings – and "software updates", when they are enhanced with the most recent settings, supposedly to make them more secure and effective. We could apply these two concepts to today's readings, with the "factory settings" being the ancient

stories which helped the Hebrew people fix their identity as God's chosen people, and the "software upgrade" offered by Peter in his first letter, in which he updates that ancient story in the light of the ministry of Jesus.

The word "repent", which we heard in today's Gospel, is derived from the Greek word *metanoia*, which means a change of heart, seeing things differently, a new direction, a fresh beginning. The Gospel writers tell us that it was after John the Baptist had been arrested that Jesus began his mission with the message, "Repent, and believe the Good News." Jesus prepared for this by spending time in the wilderness, where he was, in Mark's words, "tempted by Satan". Matthew and Luke give more details of his temptations, telling of how the devil tried to persuade Jesus to turn stones into bread, or to seek political power and influence, or to abandon his commitment to the kingdom of God.

Our first two readings use images relating to water to convey the idea of a new start. The covenant between God and Noah, made after the great flood, is symbolised by the rainbow, which is itself caused by light refracting through water droplets. Through the water of baptism, referred to by Peter in his letter, we are saved by a pledge "made to God from a good conscience", not from fear. This is the repentance, the change of direction, which Jesus preached – going forward with joy, knowing that the Lord is with us.

Epic stories of a great flood are found in the mythologies of many ancient peoples, and the writers of the book of Genesis took these narratives into their own context in order to make sense of the world in which they lived. In his first letter, Peter sees the Noah story through a new lens, the lens of Jesus as the beloved Son of God, the central figure of the new covenant. When Peter, on Pentecost day, addressed the crowd in the Acts of the Apostles, he spoke of the promise made "for you and your children, and for all those who are far away". We may be far away in both distance and time from that crowd gathered two thousand years ago in the dusty streets of Jerusalem, but the message is the same. The Good News came for our time too.

So, as we carry the Gospel story with us today, how will we spend our Lenten time in the wilderness, a place where we can really get down to basics? The Palestinian wilderness was a dangerous place and Jesus had to confront the risks. Mark's account mentions wild beasts, but also that there were angels to look after Jesus. We are never going to be able to escape all danger in this world. We have to face it and find solutions. Like Jesus, we can be assured that we are being looked after and guided to a place of safety. In our prayers, especially in situations that we find difficult and challenging, we can ask for his help and inspiration. We can discuss our problems with each other, and try to find solutions that are helpful and achievable. And we can remember above all that, as was promised through the sign of the rainbow, God is present with us always. As Jesus assures us in the Gospel, "the kingdom of God is close at hand". If we open our minds and hearts, we will find it.

Lenten Retreat

Mgr. John Armitage, Master of the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom, will be leading a Lenten Retreat on all the Mondays of Lent. Retreat Talk will be at 7pm and be followed either by Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament or Holy Mass which will be announced in advance. You attend the Retreat by going to the parish YouTube channel - St. Margaret and All Saints
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5ckD0a-Up9-FZcqs7QDXQ>

Monday March 29th which is in Holy Week - there will be a special Mass alongside the Retreat Talk as it is the First Anniversary of the Rededication of England as the Dowry of Mary.

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY
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