

BULLETIN B 14 – 28TH FEBRUARY 2021 THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Government's "roadmap out of lockdown" explained to us on Monday last is a sign that things will return to more like they were before the Covid 19 pandemic struck. We must however, make sure that we continue to keep to the guidance, we are over the worst it would seem, but it's not yet the end of the story. If we are sensible and maintain our high standards we will keep ourselves and each other safe.

England and Wales will come together to pray on 2 March 2021

Bishops from all over Europe, through their Bishops' Conferences, will join together during Lent to celebrate a series of Masses and pray for the victims of Covid-19. The continent has suffered over 770,000 deaths from the virus. The initiative, promoted by the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE), aims to offer a sign of communion and hope for the entire continent.

Each nation, or nations in our case, will come together to celebrate Holy Mass on a designated day to be part of this continental prayer network – a Eucharistic chain.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Vice President of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences, will celebrate a special **live-streamed Mass on Tuesday, 2 March 2021, at 17:30 in Westminster Cathedral**. In this parish we will also celebrate mass for the intention of the victims of Covid 19 on this Tuesday at 7.00pm, I hope that some of you will come to this mass either in person or on live stream

News of Fr Michael. Visitors are now allowed at Conewood Manor on a one-to-one basis with screening, you need to book first. As of last Sunday Fr, Michael was walking with a stick and still has a bright sparkle in his eyes he has, however, lost a considerable amount of weight. He no longer remembers the Assumption and struggles to recognise people. Although he tries, he is virtually unable to string words together to make a coherent sentence. His Spirituality has been maintained and he reads the Bible regularly even out loud! Please continue to pray for him.

God bless you all,

Fr. John

TIMES OF MASSES ETC. THIS WEEK

Sun	28	Second in Lent	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish John Hogan (RIP)
Tue	2	feria of lent	1900 Mass	Victims of Covid 19
Wed	3	feria of lent	1000 Mass 1030 Adoration	Isabella Doig
Thu	4	feria of lent	1000 Mass 1030 Adoration	Bill Harrigan (RIP)
Fri	5	feria of lent	1000 Mass 1030 Stations	John & Elizabeth Hasledon (RIP)
Sun	7	Third in Lent	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Fr. Ivor Morris (RIP)

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Even in an age when much formality from the past has been discarded, some things don't change. A good example is the list of social conventions that still operate. For example, when we meet people we have not seen before, a polite handshake has long been the norm – at least, until the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic required us to socially distance – whereas we are much less formal with family and friends. Convention is determined by many factors – age is one. Conventions dictated by formal practice are nowadays probably more regularly seen among those of an older age range, whereas young people may be much less formal within their social settings. Convention, of course, differs from culture to culture and also from one age group to another, and the setting is also important. It's interesting to observe how people's behaviour varies according to how at ease they are – or not – with others. When we know people well, it is easy to relate to them in a relaxed manner, but when we don't have that familiarity, or if we're unsure of the possible reaction of the person we have just met, then we might be more wary.

It's in the latter situation that we find Abraham when, slowly but surely, he is getting to know the God he had not known until he was seventy-five years old. Abraham made himself a backup plan. He left *most* of his family behind, but brought along his wealthy nephew, Lot; Abraham left *much* of his wealth, but not by any means all of it. Later on in the story, Abraham will seek clarification from God to see if the deal is still on. And then, as we heard in today's first reading, Abraham is really put to the test. In his old age, at long last he has a son who will be his heir: Isaac, whose name means "he will laugh". Abraham's dream has come true, his prayers are answered. He can rely on God – or can he?

One day, Abraham is told by God to take his son Isaac to a place where he is to sacrifice the boy as a burnt offering. Abraham is distraught, but prepares to obey God. The journey is long and its account is painful to read. Isaac starts to ask why there is no animal for the sacrifice. Abraham evades the issue by saying that God will provide the sacrifice. The tension builds up until the point that Abraham is prepared to kill his son on the stone altar. Eventually Isaac must know what his father intends to do. Then God acts. An angel stays Abraham's hand and the boy is freed. A ram caught in a thicket is sacrificed instead.

What are we to make of the story? Did God really want Abraham to kill his son? Had Abraham misunderstood God's instructions? The Hebrew word for a burnt offering sacrifice is also the word for "ascending" – a sacrifice where the victim went up in smoke, towards God. So is it possible that God wanted Abraham to give up his son, in other words to let him go free? Was Abraham, who waited so long for this son, so protective that, instead of Isaac being the means for God's promise to be fulfilled, he was hampered by his father's protective action? We can imagine that Isaac needed to be freed from his father's overpowering attention if he was to carry out his part in God's plan.

We do know that in the Gospel story of the transfiguration God the Father addresses Peter, James and John, telling them that Jesus is the Father's beloved Son, in whom God is well pleased, and that they must "Listen to him." To listen to Jesus is to develop trust in him. To listen to him and to reflect on the Gospel stories of his mission is to learn about God and to trust in God.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells Nicodemus, who comes to him from the darkness, that "God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son... not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved." Through lack of knowledge of God, Abraham made understandable but wrong decisions. Lent is an excellent opportunity for us to develop a listening habit: of listening to the one who is God's Word made flesh.

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY
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