

**Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady**  
**Old Harlow, Essex CM17 0HA**  
**Tel: 01279 434203**

**BULLETIN B 17 – 21<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2021**  
**THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT**

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

I rejoice that as from 1<sup>st</sup> April I and all other clinically extremely vulnerable people will no longer be required to shield. Having just read the letter from the NHS I feel like an enormous weight has been lifted from my shoulders. I guess those of you who have received this letter will be as relieved as I am. I can now do my own shopping, not that I'm ungrateful to others who have helped me with this, but I do miss my retail therapy! I can also, more importantly, give Holy Communion to you during mass, again it's not that I'm ungrateful to those special ministers of Holy Communion who have assisted us with this, but it is something that I have greatly missed. It goes without saying that we must all continue to be sensible, to follow the guidelines, wash hands, social distance and wear masks etc.

This Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, marks the anniversary of the start of the first lockdown. The government have suggested that the day is marked as a day of reflection on all that has happened in the last year. This has been underlined by our bishops who have called for a day of reflection and prayer for all who have been affected by the pandemic. We shall open the church from 11am on Tuesday and there will be a Requiem Mass for all those who have died from the virus or as a result from Covid 19. If you have names of the departed of the pandemic and would like them included in our prayer please let me know. I hope many of you will be able to join us either in person or via the live stream.

The services for Holy Week and Easter are listed below, because we shall be limited in numbers please book for Good Friday 3pm Liturgy and both masses on Easter Sunday.

Times for Reconciliation are given below, if these times do not suit please do not hesitate to let me know and we can make an appointment for you.

God bless you all

Fr. John

**TIMES OF MASS AND OTHER SERVICES THIS WEEK**

Sun	21	5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent	1000 Mass	Matthew Navin (RIP)
			1800 Mass	People of the parish
Tue	23	Covid Memorial Day	1100 private prayer and Adoration	
			1200 Mass	Covid Deceased
Wed	24	feria of lent	1000 Mass	Gerald & Mary Birchall (RIP)
Thu	25	ANNUNCIATION OLJC	1000 Mass	Nora Green (RIP)
			1030 Adoration	
Fri	26	feria of lent	1000 Mass	John & Elizabeth Hasledon (RIP)
			1030 Stations	
Sat	28	PALM SUNDAY	1000 Mass	People of the parish
			1800 Mass	John Hogan (RIP)

**TIMES OF CONFESSIONS THIS WEEK – Tue 12.30pm, Wed 10.30am, Thu 10.30am**

**GOSPEL REFLECTION**

Macmillan Cancer Support is a UK charity offering health care, information and support to people with cancer. One of their suggestions is that young parents who will not recover from cancer might think about leaving a "memory box" so that their children will remember them and know how much they loved them in the years to come.

This memory box can hold things that are special to the one who has died and might include photos, some favourite music, letters or a recorded message. These objects and messages can help remind their children and loved ones of happy times they spent together and offer them some comfort. Such a memory box would be, to echo words used in the first reading today, a way of writing the name of the departed one on the hearts of those left behind. Quite often such memory boxes will also offer hope for the future of the beloved children and a vision of what their parent would like their lives to be.

In today's Gospel, we could say that Jesus is also offering a type of "memory box" to his disciples. Firstly, as with someone who is leaving their family behind, we see Jesus' human struggle to leave those he has grown to love. Secondly, we are offered a glimpse of Jesus' hopes for his disciples' future and the hope that, when he is glorified, he will once again draw all his disciples to himself.

Jesus is sharing the reality of his impending death with his disciples, and in doing so explains it in a way that will make sense to them. He tells them that "unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain". But if it dies, "it yields a rich harvest". Jesus is that grain of wheat, that small, single grain from which the kingdom of God is to grow on earth. Jesus has to die in order for the Father's kingdom of peace, love and justice to flourish. This dying is not easy and Jesus tells us that his "soul is troubled". Letting go costs Jesus, just as it costs us in our daily lives. Yet, with the Father's word of love written on his heart, Jesus finds the courage to say, "it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour". Jesus is given the grace to see that his sacrifice is worthwhile. He is able to stretch out his arms on the cross, thereby revealing the love that the Father has for each one of us – a love so great that he gives up his only Son that we might be healed and have life to the full.

What might this say to us as followers of Christ? There are two elements in this Gospel story which are part of all our lives: love and sacrifice. This same word of the Father's love is written on our hearts too. It is written in his great generosity in sacrificing his only Son for each one of us. As we know, when we love someone, it is easier to sacrifice something of ourselves for them. We might ask ourselves: are we to make sacrifices only for those whom we love? Is that what Jesus did? Or are we called to do as he did and to offer our love to all who need it? This can be a real sacrifice which, if we offer it, will trouble our souls. It will involve a great effort but will glorify the Father. It is loving as Christ did.

In giving his disciples a vision of the immediate future, Jesus is giving them a picture, too, of the road they will travel. We could say that, with these words, he is leaving them a "memory box" for their own journey. He is leaving them something that will explain his giving up his life for the world, as well as hope for the future, that one day they will be reunited with him in joy. We can well apply this to our own lives too, for Jesus is teaching his disciples, and so teaching us, how to suffer and how to love. Such a "memory box" containing both love and sacrifice is well worth sharing with those around us.

### HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES

Sun	28	Palm Sunday	1000	Mass & 1800 Mass
Mon	29	Holy Monday	1000	Mass
Tue	30	Holy Tuesday	1900	Mass
Wed	31	Spy Wednesday	1000	Mass
Thu	1	Maundy Thursday	1900	Mass of the Lords Supper & Watch
Fri	2	Good Friday	1200	Children's Stations (Adults welcome)
			<b>1500</b>	<b>Liturgy of the Cross and Passion</b>
Sat	3	Holy Saturday	2000	Easter Vigil and First Mass of Easter
Sun	4	Easter Sunday	<b>0900</b>	<b>Solemn Mass</b>
			<b>1100</b>	<b>Family Mass</b>