

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

**BULLETIN B 18 – 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021**  
**PALM SUNDAY**

My dear brothers and sisters,

Today we enter the most sacred week of our Christian year – Holy Week. The word Holy means “set apart”, this week is therefore set apart for God. Together we journey with the Lord from his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, through his betrayal, his trial, passion and Cross, to the Resurrection. This week begins and ends with triumph, but to experience that Easter Joy we have to enter into the pain and suffering of the passion. This year the usual ceremonies that are unique to this week will be somewhat curtailed, however they will take place, albeit in a Covid secure manner. We must all be patient, remember last year we were closed entirely!

So much has happened this year, our lives have been turned upside down. Our sacramental life has been severely challenged. It's time this very week to get back on track with Our Lord, to reflect on our lives this awful past year, to confess our sins and to share in the Joy of the Risen Lord.

God Bless you all

Fr. John

PS. There are still a few places left on Good Friday and on the Easter Day Masses, but not many, so please book today. The other services this week are open to all without prior booking.

**HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES**

|     |    |                 |  |                          |
|-----|----|-----------------|--|--------------------------|
| Sun | 28 | Palm Sunday     | 1000 Mass                                    | People of the Parish     |
|     |    |                 | 1800 Mass                                    | John Hogan (RIP)         |
| Mon | 29 | Holy Monday     | 1000 Mass                                    | Nora Green (RIP)         |
| Tue | 30 | Holy Tuesday    | 1900 Mass                                    | Arthur Collins (RIP)     |
| Wed | 31 | Spy Wednesday   | 1000 Mass                                    | Fr. Stewart Foster (INT) |
| Thu | 1  | Maundy Thursday | 1900 Mass & Watch                            | Barrie Reynolds (RIP)    |
| Fri | 2  | Good Friday     | 1200 Children's Stations (Adults welcome)    |                          |
|     |    |                 | <b>1500 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 Solemn Mass</b>                      | Jennifer Ryan (RIP)      |
|     |    |                 | <b>1100 Family Mass</b>                      | People of the Parish     |

**TIMES OF CONFESSIONS THIS WEEK**

**Mon & Wed 1030am, Tue & Thu 6.30pm, Fri 1230 & 430pm, Sat 7.30pm**

**GOSPEL REFLECTION**

It is said that the quality of a country's civilisation may be measured by its treatment of its needy people and minorities. Such treatment is expressed through its laws but also in the general attitudes and behaviour of the population. Sometimes the laws are harsh and discriminatory, yet the people are welcoming and compassionate, but more often the two reflect each other. When we ask who are the people in need and who the minorities are, the reply might surprise us. To begin with there are those who are suffering physically as well as mentally. What sort of health services does a country have? How available are they to all inhabitants? How does the country treat immigrants, refugees or ethnic minorities? Does it welcome them or keep them as second-class citizens? Then there are groups that may not immediately spring to mind but equally lack power and position. How do the courts of justice and the prison system work? What about the treatment of religious minorities and LGBT people? What concern is shown for those who are elderly or the unborn, for children and women? The latter cannot be said to be a minority, but both the laws of a land and historical customs can sometimes fail to treat them as people with equal rights and dignity. So how many countries can

truly be described as civilised by these criteria? And what changes need to be implemented to encourage them in the right direction?

The accounts of the passion of Jesus in all four Gospels tell the same story but with subtle differences. The differences in Mark's account are perhaps less noticeable in comparison with the accounts in the other Gospels than in comparison with the rest of his own Gospel. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is a man of action. He is on the move, teaching and preaching, healing and feeding the multitudes. But once Judas has handed Jesus over, once he has betrayed him, the man of action disappears and we are faced with someone who is on the receiving end of others' words and actions, most of which are hostile and violent.

In Mark, Jesus only speaks three times after his betrayal. The first two occasions are to state the truth of his identity in the face of questions from the high priests and then Pontius Pilate. Finally there are the words on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" Was Jesus quoting a psalm or was he expressing the utter extremity of his experience of abandonment? We need to remember that Mark was writing for an audience that was experiencing its own torture and persecution. Was he trying to reassure them that Jesus himself had passed this way before them, letting go of everything that might have seemed to alleviate his distress? What do we learn for our benefit today?

We can read the passion stories as foundation stories of our belief. Jesus suffered, died and rose again that we might be saved and join with him in his glory. But what difference do the stories make to the way we understand life and the way we live? Like Mark's first audience we too have to deal with the way things go wrong in our lives, not necessarily through any fault of our own. What we learn from the passion stories is that our lives, too, are part of this great mystery of redemption. How we live, the choices we make, can become part of that great act of love.

This is more difficult to grasp in relation to our own suffering. It is easier to grasp when we consider how we can use our lives to relieve the sufferings of others. We have thought about those whose lives are so often undervalued by our world. What can we do to turn such attitudes around? We may think we are able to do very little, but that little is as precious as the drop in the ocean that, together with all the other drops, helps to change the world. It is also through our pursuit of the healing and nurturing of others that we come to a better understanding of our own suffering, seeing it as an act of giving on our part towards the wider mystery of redemption.

### **Palm Sunday Prayer**

Lord God,  
I give you thanks, for you are good, and your mercy is endless.  
Here I stand, at the start of this holy week,  
This week in which your church remembers Jesus' passion and death,  
And I am distracted by many things.  
Turn my eyes now to the One who comes in your name  
The one who opens the gates of righteousness  
The one who answers when we call.  
I bless you, Lord, for shining your light upon me,  
And for sending your son to us, in human frailty.  
To walk the road we walk.  
Open my eyes that I may see him coming,  
And may praise him with a pure heart.  
And may walk in the way of his suffering,  
And share also in his resurrection.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen