

Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady

Old Harlow, Essex CM17 0HA

Tel: 01279 434203

www.catholicchurchoftheassumption.co.uk

BULLETIN B 20 – 11TH APRIL 2021 THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I suppose it's partly because last year Holy Week and Easter was so terribly sad with all churches closed and no public services at all, that has made this year's festival so wonderful. Although this year we were restricted in some ways due to the virus and our need to keep ourselves and each other safe, yet what a tremendous time Holy Week and Easter was for us. I guess it's only when you have lost something that it becomes so much precious for you in the future.

I would like to thank all who helped make this Easter so special in particular: to Yolande, Eric, Maria and Bob for cleaning and maintenance; Tricia, Cheryl and Danieli for decorations, to Simon for the music, for our Stewards and their endeavours in keeping us all safe, for readers, for Stephen for the grass cutting, and for Deacon Michael who works so hard to see that all runs so smoothly.

I would also like to thank you all for your generosity, the Easter offering was so welcome, as was the gifts and cards, I am indeed the most fortunate of priests.

May the Risen Lord bless you all.

Fr. John

WORSHIP TIMES THIS WEEK

Sun	11	2 nd of Easter	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Vernem Family (RIP)
Wed	14	feria of Easter	1000 Holy Hour	
Fri	16	feria of Easter	1000 Holy Hour	
Sun	18	3 rd of Easter	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Gertrude Finden (RIP)

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Touch is the most powerful and intimate gesture we can share with another person. It is such a deep aspect of being human that it is, of course, the most powerful way of communicating love. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, we had to learn to live with the pain of "social distancing", shielding and self-isolating. Gestures such as handshakes, hugs and embraces became threats because of the danger of spreading coronavirus. Children learnt to be like helicopters by stretching out their arms to measure the distance between them. Public buildings have had to be reconfigured. Such actions create distance rather than intimacy. Many have suffered from social isolation and some people's mental health issues have been exacerbated.

The sacraments became more difficult to receive because they rely on touch and physical presence which mediate the presence of Christ; for example, the washing with water at baptism, and the anointing with sacred chrism at baptism, confirmation and holy orders. The anointing with the oil for the sick brings comfort and healing. The bread is transformed into the body of Christ but still looks like bread. The wine becomes the blood of Christ but tastes like wine. The Church had to pause its gathering for Mass. This Easter season we continue to build up our new world.

The intimate scene of encounter between the risen Christ and St Thomas is remarkable. When Jesus had appeared to his disciples after the resurrection, the one who was crucified stood among

them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They saw the wounds in his hands and side and believed he had risen from the dead. Thomas, who was not present on that first Sunday, did not accept the word of the others. He was perhaps sceptical or maybe proud. Yet Jesus continues to desire to speak to him and bring forth his belief. The mercy of Jesus is so powerful that he does not abandon him but seeks another way to speak into his heart. Jesus will always keep trying to find a way into the hardened heart and never gives up on anyone. When he appears in front of Thomas, he invites him to touch his hands with his finger and put his hand into his side. Such an intimate gesture is a sign of profound love. We hear Thomas' profound profession of faith, "My Lord and my God!"

We must love God and allow God to touch us if we wish our faith to increase. God touches us in the sacraments and especially when we receive Holy Communion. We consume the body and blood of Christ and as an act of reverence can pray, "My Lord and my God!" We grow in our Christian faith when we love our neighbour. The two commandments are deeply interrelated: when we love God, we love God's children. When we love God's children, we bring forth our love of God. The appearance of the risen Christ to Thomas teaches us that when we touch the wounds of the body of Christ, then our faith is deepened. Our faith in Christ is not something abstract, but real in creation. We touch the wounds of the body of Christ when we reach out to those who suffer, the sick child, the dying parent, those who are poor or abused, those who have to go hungry, and those whose wounds are sore and hurting. There we faithfully live the commandment to love our neighbour and love God. We are invited to enter into the wounds of others and be the compassionate presence of Christ through his body, the Church. He is the head, the source, the one who provides the nourishment and power for this outreach of love. He is the energy so that his Church may live and witness to this love. We do this through the power of touch.

Our age has also become acutely aware that touch can be intrusive or abusive; the unwanted hug, embrace or kiss. To respect others, we have to be keenly aware of what we are doing and act appropriately. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit; we are invited to see the other person with wonder and respect. Teaching children this art is important for growth. We share in the mercy of God by loving and serving others. The power of touch is a God-given gift to renew creation and God's holy people.

READING THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

One of the features of the Easter season is our daily reading of the Acts of the Apostles. Fr Adrian Graffy, parish priest of Gidea Park and member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, has prepared two audio talks on this interesting book. They can be accessed at any time free of charge by simply going to the homepage of www.whatgoodnews.org It is hoped they will be a useful accompaniment to our daily reading from Acts.

We at the Brentwood Catholic Children' Society (bccs) are seeking to appoint new members to our Board of Trustees to help guide and support our work. It is important for us to maintain a broad, diverse Board of Trustees that brings a wide range of expertise and ages to the table. Experience as a trustee is not required as a full induction programme will be provided. We are particularly keen to attract the input of youth trustees (age 18 +) to ensure our provision and services remain contemporary and there is no upper age or gender limitation to the role. Please read our full Trustee Advert and Role Description on our website <https://www.bccs.org.uk/who-we-are/trustees> and contact our Director, Bernadette Fisher bfisher@bccs.org.uk for more information.