

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

**BULLETIN B 23 – 2<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2021**  
**THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

My dear brothers and sisters,

We have reached again one of the most beautiful months of the year – the Mary month of May. For centuries our Catholic forebears have dedicated this whole month to her, who accepted God's invitation to be the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of God, and at the foot of the cross our mother also. May devotions with outdoor processions. The crowning of statues of Our Lady with flowers. The Litany of Our Lady, and other devotions said in Churches and in homes, have marked the special nature of this month.

We are not able to process outside this May, maybe next year, but we can still offer her our prayers as we come, hopefully, to the end of the pandemic. I print below the Prayer for England, that we shall say at the end of each mass this month, perhaps you can join us in your in your homes, or work place or school.

Yours in Jesus and Mary

Fr. John

**Prayer for England**

O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and our most gentle Queen and Mother, look down in mercy upon England, your dowry, and upon us all who greatly hope and trust in you. By you it was that Jesus, our Saviour and our hope, was given to the world; and he has given you to us that we may hope still more. Plead for us your children, whom you received and accepted at the foot of the cross, O mother of sorrows. Pray for our separated brethren, that in the one true fold of Christ, we may all be united under the care of Pope Francis, the chief shepherd of Christ's flock. Pray for us all, dear Mother, that by faith, and fruitful in good works, we may all deserve to see and praise God, together with you in our heavenly home. Amen.

**TIMES OF MASS THIS WEEK**

Sun	2	5 <sup>th</sup> of Easter	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	Sandy Gibb (RIP) people of the parish
Tue	4	English Martyrs	1900 Mass	Smith Family (RIP)
Wed	5	feria of Easter	1000 Mass 1030 Adoration	Maria Maggapinto (INT)
Thu	6	St. John Payne	1000 Mass	
Fri	7	feria of Easter	1000 Holy Hour	
Sun	9	6 <sup>th</sup> of Easter	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Nora Green

**GOSPEL REFLECTION**

When Covid-19 struck our world, we had to learn a new way to be human. Things that we used to think of as normal behaviour, even polite behaviour, became unacceptable – no shaking hands, embracing or kissing outside our own immediate circle. Social distancing became necessary to restrict the spread of the virus. New recommendations were promoted with ever-growing confusion in the instructions people were given: stay two metres apart; or maybe one metre was sufficient, so long as there were added precautions; masks *may* be worn, *should* be worn, *must* be worn in a variety of circumstances. We were told to stay at home and to meet with no one outside our own household; then the guidance changed so we could meet with certain numbers of people, outside but not inside. For many of us, it all became increasingly muddled and confusing.

As human beings we are social animals. We live in a society. We need other people. Our world only works because we live and work together. Social isolation, being cut off from one another, for most of us, is akin to death, and yet, in a pandemic, social integration can indeed lead to death. Our world has been turned upside down.

Today, in the Gospel reading about the vine, Jesus teaches us a new way to live in relationship with God. He uses the well-known image of the vine. In an agricultural society, people will understand how to get the best out of a vine. If the grapes are to develop so that they can be turned into good wine, they need careful management. The energy of the plant has to be directed to the fruit through proper pruning. The vine cannot be left to do its own thing or it will simply produce lots of leaves and poor quality grapes. There is an obvious connection between root and branch, leaf and fruit – they share the one life. Cut off from that life, they shrivel and die.

This same interdependence Jesus describes for us as the relationship which gives us eternal life. We are one with him and with each other, sharing the one life, his life, and in this way we can live with him and like him and produce the fruits of his love. But, Jesus warns us, the vine cannot be left to its own devices; it needs a vinedresser to manage its growth and encourage its fruitfulness, and God is such a vinedresser. God knows us and knows what part of us needs to be cut away and what needs encouragement. We are in partnership with God to produce the best version of ourselves, the best fruit, the best wine.

In the wake of the pandemic, we have to re-evaluate our role. In their attempts to end lockdown and get the economy moving, governments may have given the impression that human beings are simply cogs in the great economic machine. Is this God's vision? One thing we have learned from the pandemic is that human life is precious. It is worth putting the world on hold to preserve life. Those who save lives and help keep life safe are as valuable as those who produce wealth. The cleaners, the carers, those who keep our supply chains moving, who were once considered to be less important, are now recognised for the vital role they play in our lives.

When we look at our world through the looking glass of our faith, we see just how interconnected we really are. We are all created in the image and likeness of God, who is love. We are created for love, to love and to be loved, and this love is not restricted to our nearest and dearest. We belong together. We need each other, just as the various parts of the vine need to be connected to the entire plant. Roots, stem, branches, leaves and fruit are all bonded in a purposeful unity. But this is just a tiny example of the unity of the entire cosmos, from the great galaxies and planets, to the smallest particles of matter. All have their place, all work together. As human beings in our little fragment of this entire universe, we have been graced by God with a particular responsibility: to show that love is the overriding force binding all things together. If Covid-19 has taught us this lesson, perhaps it will all have been worthwhile

**St John's RC School, Woodford Bridge are recruiting full time Class Assistants.** Previous experience of working with children or adults with special needs is essential. For an application pack please contact the school office on 020 8504 1818 or email [office@stjohnsrcschool.co.uk](mailto:office@stjohnsrcschool.co.uk). These are term time only positions and successful applicants will be subject to an enhanced DBS check. [www.stjohnsrcschool.co.uk](http://www.stjohnsrcschool.co.uk)

**First Holy Communions** – classes in preparation for our children to make their First Holy Communions will begin shortly. If your child is in Year 3 or above at school and would like to be enrolled in the programme, please make sure you let Fr. John have your completed form asap.

### **Join Pope Francis in the Rosary Marathon for an End to COVID-19**

***The Rosary Marathon will be taking place in shrines across the world this May***  
Pope Francis has requested that the Church comes together to **pray the rosary every day throughout May** for an end to the pandemic. The Pope will be joining 30 shrines across the world throughout the month of May, with a different intention to be prayed for each day. The marathon begins this Saturday 1st May, at our own national shrine of the Basilica of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk.