

Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady

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BULLETIN B 34 – 18TH JULY 2021 THE 16TH IN ORDINARY TIME

My dear brothers and sisters,

So we now have the green light to relax safety measures to mitigate Covid transmission, but they seem as confused as ever. The Bishops will be issuing updated guidelines in the near future, until then I hope we will all proceed with caution. I personally feel we should continue to wear face masks and use sanitizers for the time being. The important thing is that we keep safe and help each other to stay healthy.

The feast of the Assumption, 15th August, falls on a Sunday this year, and as part of our celebrations we are having a "Strawberry tea" from 3pm until just before the 6pm Mass. Tickets go on sale today after mass, they are £5 for Adults and £3 for school age children. There will be cakes, strawberries and cream, tea and coffee etc. We hope that the weather will be kind and we can enjoy the tea out in our beautiful grounds. Anyone can come, as long as they have a ticket, and I would encourage you to bring friends, family and neighbours it would be good to meet together and enjoy each other's company, as well as to raise much needed funds.

Tony Rowley who has been with us on placement for the last 6 weeks of his training, in preparation for his Ordination as Deacon on Saturday 24th. It has been a privilege to work alongside him and we ask God to richly bless his future ministry.

God bless you all,
Fr. John

TIMES OF MASS THIS WEEK

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|-----|----|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Sun | 18 | 16th in Ordinary Time | 1000 Mass | Catherine Lobb (RIP) |
| | | | 1800 Mass | People of the Parish |
| Tue | 20 | feria | 1900 Mass | Tony Rowley |
| Wed | 21 | feria | 1000 Mass | Nora Green (RIP) |
| | | | 1020 Adoration | |
| Thu | 22 | St. Mary Magdalene | 1000 Mass | the Unity of Christians |
| | | | 1020 Adoration | |
| Fri | 23 | St Bridget of Sweden | 1000 Mass | Deacon Michael (INT) |
| Sun | 25 | 17 th in Ordinary Time | 1000 Mass | People of the Parish |
| | | | 1800 Mass | Irene & Patrick Wall (RIP) |

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Fr. John will be available to hear confessions in church: - Tue 6.30pm and Wed 10.30am or by appointment. We are now allowed to use the confessional room but face masks are to be worn.

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Who do we believe? Whose authority do we accept? It is a question that dominates our present world. From a medieval world where the authority of State, Church and family were clearly defined, we moved through the era of the Enlightenment to a world inspired by the sciences and monitored by the professions, doctors, teachers and lawyers, and the clergy still to some extent. Our modern world seems to have lost these bearings. Political leaders have lost credibility. All the professions have had doubts cast upon them for different reasons, from corruption to sexual abuse, and social media have become the controlling force in many of our lives, despite there being little evidence to support many of the claims that are made.

The underlying question has always been not just: "Whose authority should I believe and accept?" It has also been: "How do I develop my ability to discern what is true and what is false?" The sciences are usually credited for demanding clear evidence for statements made, but in fact this testing of information has been part of good thinking since the ancient Greeks. This is not to say that both Church and State have not at times claimed our allegiance merely on the basis that they were the voice of authority. There has always been a tension between the two approaches. Do we follow our leaders just because they are our leaders or because they are demonstrably speaking the truth?

In the first chapter of Mark's Gospel, the people respond to Jesus because he teaches with authority. The basis for their appreciation is that he has just shown them how he can cure sick people. In other words he backs up his words with actions. In today's Gospel Jesus welcomes back his disciples, who have been displaying the same gifts in their first mission by themselves. The Gospel understanding of authority is identical with the idea of authenticity. You cannot just make statements and declarations. You have to give evidence to back up your arguments. The Gospel of Jesus is one of repentance, of the need to change our lives. The change of life is in itself a getting rid of any darkness in our lives, whether it be physical or spiritual. Jesus has the power to enable us to make this change and he uses that power.

In much of this section of Mark's Gospel Jesus is in conflict with those who think and behave differently from him. Quite often it is the scribes and the Pharisees, but today's Gospel follows the story of the death of John the Baptist, in which we are faced with the conflict between the ruling forces and the message of truth. It is a forewarning of what will happen to Jesus himself. We remember that the first readers of Mark's Gospel were Christians who themselves were having to deal with persecution and the opposition of both family and former friends. Jesus himself is no stranger to such conflicts.

The second question we asked was how we ourselves can develop our ability to discern the truth. We take the example of Jesus himself. People followed him because of not just what he said but what he did. He healed them, cared for them and transformed their darkness into light. In a similar way the early Christians were acknowledged by people as "those who loved one another". In the Roman world many people were slaves or outcasts, with no rights and no respect. To be treated with respect as a human being, no matter what their social standing, gender, colour or conviction, was an introduction to a different world. Do we still offer this alternative world when we are in touch with others? As was once said: "If I were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict me?"

Our first question may then be rephrased to say: "Who or what do I turn to, to help me continue to grow in being Christ in our world?" The answer the Church has always given is "Christ himself", and in particular we encounter him in his word, in the sacraments and in his people. For guidance we turn to the Pope, the bishops and the Church's tradition, but what we look for in their guidance is not ways to criticise or condemn others who are different from ourselves but ways in which we can continue to grow in offering Christ's compassion and loving care to all.