

Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady

Old Harlow, Essex CM17 0HA

Tel: 01279 434203

www.catholicchurchoftheassumption.co.uk

BULLETIN B 50 – 7TH NOVEMBER 2021 32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

My dear brothers and sisters,

I have to say that last weekend was really special, receiving and confirming five new members to the Catholic Church was a Holy Spirit filled occasion. I was delighted further this week to receive letters and cards from the new Catholics, all of them praising you the people of our parish for the welcome you had given to them. I of course am not surprised, for I have seen how you welcome home new members, just as well for we have known a surge in new parishioners in recent months. If I may borrow a slogan that seems to fit us in our situation “build back better”. I very much look forward to celebrating Christmas with you all.

The Childrens’ Liturgy restarts this Sunday during the 10am Mass. I am grateful to the teachers for their time and expertise. It would be good if one of the parents would take it in turns to support them in the hall during the sessions.

Further news of the forthcoming Quiz Night on 20th November will be explained today.

God bless you all

Fr. John

Applications for **Confirmation in 2022** should be made to Deacon Michael immediately either directly or at revmichaelsmith@outlook.com

Those taking part need to be 14 years old at Pentecost and wish to undertake the course themselves.

The first introduction meeting is on the 14th November at 12.30pm.

TIMES OF THIS WEEK’S SERVICES

Sun	7	32 OT	1000 Mass	People of the Parish
			1200 Baptism of Luca Frangiamore	
			1800 Mass	
Wed	10	St. Leo the Great	1000 Holy Hour	
Sun	14	33 OT	1000 Mass	Victims of war & violence
			1200 Baptism of Oscar Mulholland	
			1800 Mass	People of the Parish

GOSPEL REFLECTION

The FIFA World Cup normally takes place every four years. If you are a football fan, it is a long time to wait. The hype, however, begins to build up many months beforehand. This was especially so for the 2018 World Cup. It was the first time the tournament had been hosted by an eastern European country, and there was concern among many about the government's record on human rights. To many fans, however, the prospect of travelling to Russia seemed thrilling. More than three million set off to Moscow, imagining that affordable tickets and cheap accommodation would be easily available. After all, Russia was a big country, with eleven host cities as match venues.

However, it was every scammer's dream. Many fans fell victim to cybercriminals who posed as ticket agents, or who took over the accounts of hoteliers to steal people's bank details. Russians alone were targeted by 25 million cyberattacks. People had been too trusting, too carried away by football mania, willing to believe in special offers that turned out to be too good to be true. The tournament left a question on people's minds: was corruption spoiling "the beautiful game"?

A similar question worried people in Jesus' day. Corruption was spoiling the beauty of God's Temple. At festival times, a vast crowd of pilgrims headed for Jerusalem, looking forward to the Temple worship. United in belief, they came longing for forgiveness, often desperate for healing. As with football fans, enthusiasm made some of them a target for exploitation. The Temple had vast wealth and not everyone who officiated there was honest or unselfish.

The disciples may have been in awe of their magnificent surroundings, but Jesus looked beyond. He pointed out religious leaders in flowing robes, lapping up the wide-eyed admiration of visitors and persuading vulnerable people to give money in expectation of a blessing. He noticed something else. At first sight it appeared unremarkable: someone dropping coins into one of the trumpet-shaped collection boxes. Worshippers were expected to make sacrificial offerings for their sins and the cheapest was a pair of pigeons at the cost of two pennies, but Jesus understood what those two pennies meant for this particular widow: it was all she had. He seemed saddened that the moral and religious life of his nation had come to this. He was reminded, perhaps, of the widow of Sidon in our first reading. She also gave her all, but there was a difference: she was not being exploited by unscrupulous people. She had been asked for help by a starving man in time of famine. There was just enough food for one last meal, yet she allowed herself to be moved by a fellow human being in distress and shared it.

It was no coincidence that Jesus forgave sins for free, healed for free and taught for free. He deplored the way the Temple took advantage of people. "Beware", he says, in case we should ever be tempted to do the same, or seek to benefit from the suffering of others by giving in order to attract attention to ourselves. True generosity is not about us: it focuses on others. It allows a cry for help to melt our hearts in compassion. Charities today are in need of funding as never before and people may sometimes feel under pressure. Jesus does not expect us to give what we do not have. He urged one young man to give his possessions away, but the man was rich and Jesus asked him to give the money to those who were poor, not to an already rich institution. We have to make responsible choices, and today's readings urge us to let fellow feeling be the basis for those choices.

Jesus still watches at the treasury of our hearts, still saddened that charitable giving is so often out of a sense of obligation, or because people feel that God cannot love them as they are. Just as he invited his disciples to look – *really* look – at what was going on around them, Jesus calls us to recognise human distress when we see it and to be moved to respond. It may be with money, but practical help and companionship are often needed too. The prophecy came true for the widow who shared a meal with Elijah: her flour jar was never empty, her jug of oil never ran dry. May that be true of our own hearts.