

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY
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BULLETIN B 6 – THE SECOND SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS 3RD JANUARY 2021

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

HAPPY NEW YEAR

As we all know, the whole of Essex is now under Tier 4 restrictions and many of our schools will not be reopening fully as Essex is one of the worst hit areas in the country. The scenes at some of our hospitals are very worrying. The new strain of the virus seems to transmit more readily and, therefore, extra vigilance is very important. The government site below gives more information.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tier-4-stay-at-home>

In the light of this we must continue to ensure that our church is as Covid-secure as possible over the next few days and weeks as we hope that the roll-out of the vaccine will enable us to return to a more normal way of living and praying together. It is, therefore, critical that as a Parish we stringently follow the guidelines for places of worship as set out by the government and Bishops' Conference.

I have decided that from next Sunday until at least the end of January the 6pm Mass on Sunday evenings is suspended. As someone in the "Clinically Extremely Vulnerable" category I need to keep my time outside of my house to a minimum. If this affects you, I do hope that you will understand and as soon as it is safe to do so the mass will be reinstated.

God Bless you all.
Fr. John

MASS & ADORATION TIMES UNTIL 10TH JANUARY

Sun	3	2 nd Sun of Christmas	10:00 Mass	Jennifer Ryan (RIP)
			18:00 Mass	People of the Parish
Tue	5	Epiphany Eve	19:00 Mass	John Hogan (RIP)
Wed	6	Epiphany of Our Lord	10:00 Mass	People of the Parish
			10:30 Adoration	
Thu	7	feria	10:00 Mass	Nora Green (RIP)
			10:30 Adoration	
Fri	8	feria	10:00 Mass	Catherine Glover (RIP)
Sun	10	Baptism of Our Lord	10:00 Mass	People of the Parish

GOSPEL REFLECTION

During the Second World War all the signposts were removed from British roads in case the country was invaded. It was hoped that the enemy would get lost, running round in circles, long enough for defensive measures to be taken. Of course, the country was not invaded and inevitably it was the resident population that got confused and lost. There are many stories of what happened in those days, including one about a brave woman who made a remarkable journey. She drove an old Ford van from a small village in north Lincolnshire, with the aid of a road atlas, all the way to an RAF station in Oxfordshire. What made her even more courageous was the fact that in those days you didn't need to pass a driving test and she had hardly learned to drive. Yet she managed to find her

way across the country, from one village to another, in order to meet her husband who was on a twenty-four-hour leave, and then find her way back. All for true love.

For a lot of people today life is like that: going from day to day without the signposts that religion provides or what has been called a “moral compass”. Some people do take seriously wrong turnings in life and get completely lost; and it is a terrible grief to their families when this happens. But the majority find their way through life.

In today’s Gospel, John explains how it is that people manage to find their way. He tells us there is a light in everyone: a light “that enlightens all” whoever they are, people of all religions and faiths, or of none at all; atheists and agnostics, saints and sinners all have this inner light, which guides us through life. It means common sense, natural understanding, wisdom, conscience, instinctive knowledge, reason – call it what you will, this light – everyone has it. John gave a name to this light that everyone has within them. He calls it “the Word”. What he says may be a little subtle, though hopefully not too obscure for us. He is writing originally to Greeks, whose philosophers used this term *logos*, “word”, meaning by it an inner perception or reason. Aristotle taught that it is the innate sense that enables a human being to distinguish between good and evil. St John Henry Newman explained it to be conscience, the voice of God.

One day St Paul was strolling around ancient Athens, admiring its sacred monuments, when he came across an altar inscribed, “To an unknown God”. Paul stood there and explained who this God is, this God they did not know. It is Jesus, he declared. Similarly, St John disclosed, this Word within everyone has become a human being, Jesus Christ. “The Word was made flesh” and “lived among us”. We saw God’s glory. The Word, which speaks to everyone within their minds, now had a body and can speak for all to hear.

We don’t have to look very far to find God. We need only look into ourselves, at this light within us. And then read the scriptures. We then recognise that the voice that speaks within us as we listen to it is the voice of Jesus, whose words we find in the scriptures. In St John Henry Newman’s novel *Callista*, the title character has to explain what she means by “God”. She answers: “I feel God within my heart. I feel myself in his presence. He says to me, ‘Do this: don’t do that’... it is the echo of a person speaking to me. Nothing shall persuade me that it does not ultimately proceed from a person external to me... My nature feels towards it as towards a person. When I obey it, I feel a satisfaction; when I disobey, a soreness – just like that which I feel in pleasing or offending some revered friend.”

In the Gospel, John gives this promise to those who recognise the voice of Jesus within themselves and follow him: “to all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God”. St Paul became a changed person when he recognised the voice of Jesus. And that is why he prayed for Christians in Ephesus (and by implication for us, too): “May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit.”

Spare time? Go to LOURDES:

For those of you like me with very limited computer skills I discovered a virtual tour of the Lourdes shrine Thanks to the generosity of the Order of Malta. By experimental clicking you will discover the inside and outside of the Sanctuary as you have never seen it before: you will be able to visit the inside of the basilicas, enter the Grotto, walk through the Sanctuary grounds, soar above the domain and get an aerial view too. Thanks to this visit, you will see unexpected details, you will have unique views and perspectives of the Sanctuary. It gave me hours of pleasure and renewed memories.

Go to <https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/virtual-tour/> and click on the yellow virtual tour tab.