

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY

Mulberry Green,
Harlow, CM17 0HA
01279 429388

harlowold@dioceseofbrentwood.org

BULLETIN B 8 – 17TH JANUARY 2020

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

My dear Brother and Sisters,

On Friday this week we celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the establishment of The Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham by Pope Benedict XVI. The Holy Father Emeritus wanted a structure to allow Anglicans to enter into the full communion of the Catholic Church whilst retaining much of their heritage and traditions. It now has the full support and blessing of Pope Francis also.

As many of you are aware, I and a group of Anglicans came into the Catholic Church through the Ordinariate and made our home here at The Assumption of Our Lady. I have now been given the privilege of becoming your Parish Priest, and the Parish, whilst remaining a Parish of the Diocese has been entrusted to the Ordinariate. This is the same as when in former times the parish was entrusted to the Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception.

The Ordinariate exists to promote the unity of all Christians with the Apostolic See, and faithfully to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the rich treasures of our traditions. As it so happens this coming week (18th – 25th January) is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, there will be a mass for that intention on Tuesday evening, I hope that some of you will join us either in person or via live stream. Also I ask that you use the prayer given below on each of the days of the Unity Octave.

God Bless you all
Fr. John

TIMES OF MASS AND ADORATION THIS WEEK

Sun	17	2 nd in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass	People of the Parish
Tue	19	feria	1900 Mass	John Hogan (RIP)
Wed	20	St. Sebastian	1000 Mass	Isabelle Doig (INT)
			1030 Adoration	
Thu	21	St. Agnes	1000 Mass	Maureen Potter (INT)
			1030 Adoration	
Fri	22	feria	1000 Mass	Unity of Christians
Sun	24	3 rd in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass	People of the Parish

GOSPEL REFLECTION

A mondegreen occurs when someone mishears a word or phrase, giving it a completely new meaning. The lyrics to songs are particularly susceptible to mondegreens. Bob Dylan's, "The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind", becomes: "The ants are my friends, they're blowing in the wind." "Oh, say, can you see by the dawn's early light" becomes: "Jose, can you see by the donzerly light." Many people apparently believe "donzerly" is a real word. And famously on the long-running BBC comedy show *The Two Ronnies*, a labourer walks into a hardware store and asks for what sounds like four candles, until the frustrated storekeeper eventually realises the man is asking for "fork 'andles – handles for forks". Understandably, children are prone to mishearing, especially when it comes to religious phrases: "Our Father, who art in heaven, Harold be thy name" is a classic. Or in the Hail Mary: "blessed art thou a monk swimming". We are all liable to mishear and misunderstand.

Today's readings are about the importance of hearing properly, about listening with the heart. The boy Samuel mishears as he is lying on his bed. When the Lord calls him, he mistakenly believes it is his guardian Eli calling him. Only after the third call does Eli finally understand that what Samuel is really hearing is the call of God. Samuel's response – "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening" – indicates the prerequisite for the perfect disciple: a commitment to listening to the voice of God and carrying it out. In fact, we are told that not only was the Lord with Samuel, but that the Lord let no word of Samuel's "fall to the ground" – an indication that Samuel was so in tune with the Lord's voice, with the Lord's mind and intentions, that everything Samuel spoke rang true and came to pass. Authentic hearing results in authentic speaking and acting.

In the Gospel, the two disciples of John the Baptist are also in listening mode. They have committed to following John in response to an inner call from God. And yet now John, in effect, sends them away to listen to the voice of another – Jesus, "the lamb of God". It's not that they have been mishearing by listening to John. But John knows that a deeper listening is now needed, that there is someone better to listen to, someone – as John would go on to say – more powerful than he, someone filled with God's Holy Spirit. The two disciples go home with Jesus at about 4 p.m. and spend the rest of the day with him, listening to him. And Jesus' words, like Samuel's, are effective: in those few hours, they transform Andrew so dramatically that he is able to say to his brother Peter: "We have found the Messiah." They have found what their inner voice had called them to look for.

How do we become good listeners to the Lord? How do we allow ourselves to become transformed by God's Word – by Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh? Perhaps primarily, like those two disciples, we need to spend time with the Lord. That's not a skill, it's simply a discipline, a commitment.

But there are ordinary human skills that can help us tune in to the voice of God and allow it to change us. As with listening to another human being, when listening to the Lord, we need to get rid of distractions – the sound of TV and radio, switching off the phone perhaps. The best listening happens when we are alert but attentive: putting our body in an upright but comfortable position helps. Keep an open mind – the "open ear" of today's psalm – try to set aside preconceived ideas or expectations, because it's easy to mishear and misunderstand, to impose our own meanings, our own preconceived ideas. And don't interrupt – listening means exactly that.

Communicating with God isn't the same as holding a two-way conversation with a human being, but the essentials are the same. It's about relationship, trust, openness, quality time and listening with the heart to what is really being communicated. God's Word is ultimately a person – Jesus Christ. When we listen to the Lord, when we encounter the Messiah, our lives are changed. Because the Lord doesn't communicate facts or data – the Lord communicates God's self: God's love, God's life, God's mercy. When we allow ourselves to "hear" those things, be touched by them, they evoke a response in us which goes beyond mere words: they change our lives.

PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

That they all may be one, as you, Father in me and I in you,
That they may also be one in us;
That the world may believe it was you who sent me.

V. I say to you, you are Peter.
R. And on this rock I will build my Church.

Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles; Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen