

## BULLETIN B 9 – 24<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021 THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

### Covid Vaccine

Many of us have had/are having our Vaccinations to combat the pandemic, light is at the end of the tunnel, as they say. Whilst this is an occasion for a collective sigh of relief, the virus is still very much with us and continues to be a threat. For the sake of others we must continue to follow the guidance, to stay at home, wear our masks, wash our hands etc. According to the news this week Harlow is one of the most infected areas at this time. We also need to continue to pray for an end to the virus and its grip on our world, for those affected by it and for all who seek to help others in need.

### New President

I was able, due to lockdown, to watch most of the Inauguration of Joe Biden as the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the USA. I was struck by his speech after being sworn in. He seems to be a man of integrity and peace, who seeks to bring unity to his divided nation. I was most impressed that he began his day by going to mass, taking members of his family and congress with him. This was no stunt, but a near daily occurrence. Oh I know, not every Catholic who goes to mass is a saint, but it's a start. When we go to mass, or meet with God in the sacraments and in prayer, we are open to the influence of his love. I pray that God will richly bless the new President of America and gift him with all that he needs to lead that great nation.

### First Holy Communion

I have only heard of two possible children who are eligible and wanting to make their First Holy Communion this year, I expect there are others who have not yet come forward, Covid 19 has a lot to answer for! We hope to begin teaching for this in February. This will probably be delivered by Zoom this year. First Communion applicants should be at least 7 years old at Corpus Christi Feast, which is the 6th June in 2021. **Please ask me for an application form** if you would like your child to make their First Holy Communion this year. All applicants should be attending Mass as often as permitted under the COVID-19.

God bless you all

Fr. John

### TIMES OF MASS AND ADORATION THIS WEEK

Sun	24	3 <sup>rd</sup> in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass	People of the Parish
Tue	26	Ss. Timothy & Titus	1900 Mass	Mary & Gerry Quinn (RIP)
Wed	27	feria	1000 Mass	Isabella Doig (INT)
			1020 Adoration	
Thu	28	St. Thomas Aquinas	1000 Mass	Seminarians
			1020 Adoration	
Fri	29	feria	1000 Mass	Tess Hogan (RIP)
Sun	31	4 <sup>th</sup> in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass	People of the Parish

### PLENARY INDULGENCE

The Apostolic Penitentiary in Rome has agreed to a request from Mgr Newton for a Plenary Indulgence to be available during this anniversary year of the establishment of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. From 15th January 2021 to 1st January 2022 any member of the faithful who attends Mass celebrated according to Divine Worship: The Missal or who participates in a public celebration of the Divine Office according to Divine Worship: Divine Office may receive a Plenary Indulgence. The indulgence is subject to the usual conditions of Sacramental Confession, reception of Holy Communion and prayers for the Holy Father's intentions.

## GOSPEL REFLECTION

When we read the lives of the saints it is striking how many changed their lives in dramatic ways to follow Christ. The earliest example is St Paul who, because of his personal encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, changed from being a committed persecutor of Christians to being the great apostle of the pagans. The change was not always as dramatic but involved a movement away from one lifestyle to a very different one. We think of St Augustine of Hippo searching restlessly through a variety of philosophical and religious traditions until eventually ending up in Milan. There the combination of his encounter with St Ambrose and the ceaseless prayers of his mother, Monica, resulted in his conversion and his return to North Africa where he would become a bishop and a great theologian whose works are influential even today. St Ignatius of Loyola and St Camillus de Lellis were both dedicated soldiers whose injuries brought them to reflect more deeply on their lives. As St Ignatius expressed it, when he read his staple diet of romances and chivalry he remained dissatisfied and discontented; when he read the Bible and lives of the saints he felt at peace and fulfilled.

Interestingly enough, many women saints do not seem to have this abrupt change of path. It is more often that they are clear in their minds from an early age but have to fight both the Church and society to follow their vision and be allowed to follow Christ in the way in which they feel he calls them. We can think of St Teresa of Avila and St Thérèse of Lisieux and perhaps also of St Jane Frances de Chantal, who would probably have social services in pursuit in our times for seemingly abandoning her family in pursuit of the religious life.

The word "Gospel" means good news, and St Mark's intention behind his Gospel is to persuade his listeners and readers that, despite the persecution they were undergoing, it really was "good news". He does this by showing Jesus in action. There are far fewer of the teachings of Jesus in St Mark's Gospel than in the other Gospels. He talks about Jesus teaching but, apart from the parables, the Jesus we encounter is the person who heals and nourishes and calls people to follow him.

There is something very restless in St Mark's account, an urgency right from the start in the underlying message that the kingdom is close at hand and we need to change our hearts, change our ways. The kingdom is Mark's description of the presence of God, brought about through and in the person of Jesus, and it is the person of Jesus who is the good news. There is also something very curt about the way Jesus calls his disciples. Simon and Andrew, James and John are going about their daily activities, fishing and preparing to fish. With his joke about now being made "fishers of men" rather than of fish, Jesus calls them and, immediately, they follow him. There is no debate or discussion, seemingly not even farewells. The meeting with Jesus is sufficient for them to get up and go.

We are all at different stages of our lives. Probably few of us are at the point where we are looking for what is missing in our lives. Some of us may, like the people of Nineveh in the first reading, have become stuck in a rut that we would like to change but lack the willpower or conviction. Others of us may, like the apostles, be happily dealing with our daily lives without giving too much thought to what Christ might be asking of us over and above that. Others may have experienced that change that comes about through the encounter with Christ and are trying to tread a path that expresses that deeper commitment.

At the start of a New Year, at the start of a reading once again of a different Gospel, it is a good time to renew our awareness of what our belief in Christ means. As with the experience of the apostles, it is not so much a question of reflecting on ourselves but asking what we think Christ is asking of us. Who is this person who wanders into our lives and asks us to follow him? And can we get up and follow him, even though we don't know where he is leading us? During this year St Mark's Gospel will help us to discern that path.