

**Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady
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**BULLETIN C 11 – 6TH FEBRUARY 2022
FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

My dear brothers and sisters,

We have heard a lot recently about those in authority and how through what seems to be a total misuse of power have lost the respect and trust of our nation. This is no new phenomenon, the pages of history are littered with leaders who have abused their authority for their own ends. The charge of “one rule for us and another for them” has often been repeated, with justification. Our response to this situation should not be anger or despair but rather quiet reflection and fervent prayer for our nation and its leaders. God’s will be done, his kingdom come!

The irony is that today we commemorate the day when 70 years ago today, Elizabeth became our Queen. Much will be said and celebrated this year about this gracious lady, but for me what stands out so clearly is the way she has exercised her authority with integrity, and that deserves my respect and trust. The Queen uses every opportunity to encourage, by example, Christian behaviour in us all. Whatever we think about monarchy our Queen has for the last 70 years displayed a vocation of service to the nation and indeed the commonwealth.

God Save the Queen,
God bless you all,
Fr. John

TIMES OF MASS DURING THIS WEEK

Sun	6	5 th in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Edith Fox (RIP)
Sun	13	6 th in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish

The Helpers of God’s Precious Infants reach out in love and compassion to mothers who are pregnant and in crisis and to those who have suffered the effects of abortion. Why not join us and help to hold out God’s Hand of Love and Mercy? The next Rosary Procession and Vigil, will be held on Saturday 12th February at St. Francis of Assisi Church, Grove Crescent Road, Stratford E15 1NS. We begin with 10.00am Mass; Rosary Procession at 10.35am, following an Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, to BPAS abortion centre, 32-36 Romford Road, Stratford E15 4BZ, where we pray 15 decades of the Rosary and sing hymns, returning at approx. 12.00pm to the church for refreshments. Full details on poster in church porch or contact tel. 01727 763832 or e-mail marg@helpersuk.org

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Commercial fishing is not for the faint-hearted. Workers on factory ships remain at sea for weeks at a time. Fishing is number one on the world's list of deadly occupations. Fatalities at sea are far higher than in other dangerous jobs such as the army or fire service. Rogue waves are known to sweep people off deck. Modern vessels are full of winding gear and hazardous machinery. Dwindling fish stocks have made fishing extremely competitive, so that the "race to fish" often means working fast.

Fishing has always been a dangerous occupation. It certainly was in St Peter's day. The Sea of Galilee is a lake. That might sound less treacherous than the open sea, but storms can whip up the surface without warning. Fisherfolk liked to stay close to shore. Sometimes they fished from the beach, casting a net into the shallows. As for the middle of the lake, the water there was too deep for comfort. Demons lurked below, or so they feared. Courage, patience, strength... these were not always enough. However hard they might work, fisherfolk sometimes caught nothing at all. It was natural to conclude that they must have done something sinful to have forfeited God's favour. It was sometimes not just the smell of fish pervading Capernaum, it seems, but an air of despondency.

Jesus had made his home in this fishing port, and in today's Gospel we catch up with him in a little bay south-west of the town, a kind of "theatre" of nature. Tourists still marvel at its acoustics – they call it the "Bay of the Parables". Jesus was teaching people from Simon's boat so that the surface of the water could amplify his voice. The fishermen had been washing their nets at a place where spring water cascades into the lake. Nets were made of linen thread in those days. Although the men had caught nothing that night, it was important to wash and thoroughly dry their nets; otherwise they would rot.

Jesus suggested they go fishing again, with him this time and further out. The fishermen, however, were ready for bed. They worked at night because in daylight fish could see the nets. In any case, the nets were now drying. We can imagine the reluctance with which Simon's crew set out again. When they did, the boat nearly sank, the nets were torn – but the catch was the biggest they had ever hauled. Good fortune on that scale seemed more than they deserved, which disturbed Simon. You might recall today's first reading, where the prophet Isaiah felt unclean and ashamed in the holy presence of God. That was evidently how Simon felt in the company of Jesus. Like Isaiah, he was having to adjust to a new way of thinking: to believe that God really does love imperfect men and women; that blessings do not come as a reward for good behaviour, but because *God* is good. Simon, that morning, encountered grace.

Any experience of unmerited love is likely to be transformative, though it is hard for some people to believe they are loved at all. It took some persuasion for Simon to open himself to the fierce love of God that cleanses and transforms. Yet it is not long before we see him invigorated and hope-filled, and given a new name, Peter, meaning "rock". Faith empowered him to make a difference in his world, saving people instead of catching fish. Many people expect little from life, convinced that they are unlovable or beyond redemption. Jesus calls us to "put out into the deep", to trust that God really does love and want to bless us. Faith, like seafaring, is a kind of venturing out. Fear may hold us back: fear of what might be lurking in the deep of our own hearts, or fear of what God may ask of us. Perhaps it feels safer to remain as we are. There is something reassuring about nets drying on a sunlit beach – who would want to risk them getting torn?

"Leave me, Lord," begged Simon. Deep down, is it our prayer too? If so, the Lord will never answer "Yes". The Lord yearns to be part of our everyday experience; to accompany us to places within ourselves where we dare not venture; to gift our lives with abundance. Don't be frightened, says Jesus. God means to wash, untangle and fill us – a bit like those fishing nets.