

**Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady
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**BULLETIN C 18 – 27TH MARCH 2022
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT – MOTHERING SUNDAY**

My dear brothers and sisters,

Today, the fourth Sunday in Lent has many names. “Laetare Sunday”, meaning “Rejoice Sunday” for this is the mid-lent Sunday when we can all relax a little from our Lenten observances, the organ can be played, a few flowers decorate the altar and the priest wears Rose pink vestments. Today is the day we can enjoy those things we have been denying ourselves; chocolate, alcohol, or whatever this is why the old English name for today is “Refreshment Sunday”. It is of course also Mothering Sunday, when it was the tradition, certainly in this country, for children living away from home to visit their Mothers, taking with them flowers and other small gifts as tokens of their love for their mothers. One such gift was Simnel Cake, light fruit cake made in two halves joined together with marzipan which also tops it off. This morning we will distribute small poesies of flowers to the children at mass for them to give to their mums.

God bless you all and have a good day!

Fr. John

PS. Readers Rota - Deacon Michael is about to do a new Readers list, if you would like to read at mass please put your name on the list.

**Last Sunday's Cash Collections was
Offertory £132-40 and Cafod £282-00**

TIMES OF MASSES & SERVICES THIS WEEK

Sun	27	Fourth Sunday in Lent	1000 Mass 1200 Mass 1800 Mass	Paddy & Nanny Maloney Peace in Ukraine People of the parish
Tue	29	feria of lent	1900 Mass	
Wed	30	feria of lent	1000 Mass 1030 Adoration	Terry Flood (RIP)
Thu	31	feria of lent	1000 Mass 1030 Lent Group	
Fri	1	feria of lent	1000 Mass 1030 Stations of the Cross	Eileen & Alex Welsh (RIP)
Sun	3	Fifth Sunday in Lent	1000 Mass 1200 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the parish Vic Potter (RIP)

TIMES FOR THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION THIS WEEK

Fr. John will hear confessions on Tuesday at 6.30pm, Wednesday at 10.30am or by appointment.

SERVICES OF RECONCILIATION BEFORE EASTER

Wednesday 6th April at 7.30pm at The Assumption of our Lady

Monday 11th April at 7.30pm in Holy Cross Harlow

Tuesday 12th April at 7.30pm in St Edmund of Canterbury Loughton

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Coral Atkins, who died in 2016, was an English actress whose best-known role was in the 1970s TV series *A Family at War*. In 1971, while officially opening a children's home, she became distressed at the plight of a child there. She determined to open her own home for disturbed and disadvantaged children, very often children who came from violent homes or had traumatic experiences. Coral's first project housed ten children. One little girl screamed from the moment she awoke until the moment she fell asleep; another little girl never spoke and was obsessed with washing her hands. Several children destroyed their beautiful rooms – pulling wallpaper off the walls or breaking the furniture – but she immediately forgave them and repaired the rooms again. One boy tried to burn the house down, but she showed him mercy. She once fired a matron who smacked one of the children.

Altogether, Coral took in thirty-seven children in her lifetime. Her career took second place to her vocation to help disturbed children. The children, when treated with respect and affection, slowly became a supportive family. Coral had the gift of empathy, gentleness and compassion. The children in turn learnt to feel affirmed and loved. The story has echoes of today's Gospel story of a wayward child and a merciful parent.

Today's parable is one of the best-known and best-loved stories in the Bible. While it is generally called the parable of the prodigal son, the focus is not only on the prodigal son and his repentance but on the father and his mercy. Incidentally, the story could be called the parable of the resentful brother, since it is also about a brother who was very indignant about his younger brother's self-indulgence and angry with his father for showing mercy towards him. Resentment has stolen his joy. He has been loyal to his father and his estate, an upright member of the community, and feels he deserves to be the sole inheritor of his father's wealth.

The father's mercy and love encompass both sons. He wants not only his younger son back, but his elder son as well. But will that elder son respond to his father's plea or remain stuck in bitterness? This is not a story that separates the two brothers into the good one and the evil one. It is only the father who demonstrates goodness. He wants both to participate in his joy. "All I have is yours," he says to the elder son. The father's unreserved, unlimited love is offered wholly and equally. He does not compare the two sons. He expresses complete love according to their individual journeys.

The prodigal son is that part of us which is rebellious and irresponsible with the gifts God has placed in our lives. We recognise him in ourselves when we go racing through the good experiences and things in life, unaware of the price and indifferent to long-term consequences. Perhaps we are takers who gather everything we can to ourselves, or squander what we have. Perhaps we don't show appreciation for our parents and families. Today's parable teaches that God offers people a second chance. Jesus calls for repentance and assures us that it is never too late to turn around our lives to bear fruit in God's eyes. God doesn't give up on us when we do things that are wrong and will always forgive us if we truly repent.

And what can we learn from the older brother's jealousy? Are you carrying a resentment that is stealing your joy? Have you tried to be less judgemental? How willing are you to reflect on this story for the rest of Lent, and do something about it so that Easter joy can be yours?

Lent is an opportunity for new beginnings for ourselves and perhaps we should take the opportunity to give one another a second chance, to show mercy, learning from the father in the story. Perhaps consider someone who has wronged us or someone who is socially unacceptable. What can we do to give that person a second chance? Do we know of any young people on the margins of society who need support, such as young offenders or young people trying to gain work skills after a long period of unemployment? Where do you find yourself in this story? Which character do you find yourself most drawn to emotionally?

SOCIAL CALENDAR 2022

Saturday 14th May

Thursday 2nd June

Sunday 14th August

Saturday 27th August

Friday 30th September

Sunday 18th December

Sonare Concert - 4.00pm

Fr. John's 40th Anniversary Mass & Party – 7.00pm

Assumption Day Strawberry Tea

Day Pilgrimage to Walsingham

Macmillan Cancer Support Coffee Morning

Carol Service & Refreshments