

**Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady
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**BULLETIN C 21 – 17TH APRIL 2022
EASTER SUNDAY**

My Dear brothers and sister,

CHRIST IS RISEN. ALLELUIA!

Happy Easter and may He bless you all!

Fr. John

REFUGEE COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUP: A volunteer group is being set up at St John Payne, in conjunction with the Diocese of Brentwood and Caritas Brentwood, to raise funds and provide practical support for a refugee family, to be housed in Colchester. Anyone interested in becoming involved or finding out more is warmly invited to attend a meeting, chaired by Fr Dominic Howarth, on Saturday 7th May 2022 at 1.30pm, at St John Payne Catholic Church Hall, Blackthorn Avenue, Colchester CO4 3QD. Please email SJPRefugeeProject@gmail.com for more information.

Thursday Study Group – During Lent a group met after mass on Thursday mornings. Using the DVD course “Joy of the Gospel” we looked at the way of responding to the Holy Fathers call to further the work of evangelization. This Thursday after mass we will look at the practical steps we can make to serve those in great need in our parish and further afield. If you feel that you can contribute to the discussion please do come along or email Fr. John.

Become a chaplaincy volunteer at our local hospital and help make a difference for patients, their families, carers and staff. The Ten week training course will run every Tuesday evening starting on Tuesday 26 April 2022. Time: 6:30-8:30pm. Venue: Lecture Theatre (Alex study centre). Email: paht.chaplaincy@nhs.net or call 01279973407 or 01279973183 to book your space.

TIMES OF MASSES THIS WEEK

Sun	17	Easter Sunday	1000 Sung Mass	People of the Parish
			1200 Mass	the newly baptised
Tue	19	Easter Tuesday	1000 Mass	
Wed	20	Easter Wednesday	1000 Mass	John & Maddy Kelly (INT)
Thu	21	Easter Thursday	1000 Mass	Vera White (RIP)
Sun	24	Easter Sun 2	1000 Sung Mass	Irene Wall (RIP)
			1200 Mass	Peace in Ukraine
			1800 Mass	People of the Parish

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Early on Easter Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene headed towards the tomb in order to finish the anointing of Jesus' body. She was the first to do so. Was it because she wanted to spend private time with Jesus? Was she trying to spare his mother the agony of seeing him before he was as presentable as she could make him? Was it a bit of both? On her arrival, Mary found the stone rolled back and the tomb empty. The Gospels all tell slightly different versions but agree that she hurried back to tell the disciples of her discovery. Mark and Luke tell us that they didn't believe Mary and that, when he subsequently appeared to them in the Upper Room, Jesus scolded his followers for their disbelief.

Mary Magdalene had accompanied Jesus to his crucifixion and, along with his mother and a few other women, had stayed there until he died. So often it's women who stand alongside someone who is suffering, offering whatever support they can. Of all Jesus' disciples, John was the only male representative. Perhaps embarrassment fuelled the men's response now. Afraid for their own lives, they had run away and avoided Calvary. Mary had courageously witnessed horrors they had escaped. Mary's faithfulness made her the first witness to the resurrection.

In ancient Israel, women participated in every aspect of community life except in the Temple priesthood. But by the time of Jesus, respectable women were required to live segregated from men in their private, public and religious life. Jesus was different. He treated women with respect, speaking to them in private and in public. In response, women loyally travelled with him, staying with him at the foot of the cross when the men ran away. Who took Jesus down from the cross? John tells us it was Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea – was it also, perhaps, the women? It seems that the apostles were too afraid even to do that much for someone they loved. They knew that a stone was rolled across the entrance to the tomb but, knowing that the sabbath had interrupted the ritual anointing of Jesus' body, did the men consider that it might be too heavy for the women to move out of their way?

Of the apostles, it was Peter and John that decided to investigate the truth of Mary's report. But they only fully began to believe her when they saw the evidence for themselves. Jesus had told them that he would rise from the dead, but they hadn't understood what he was saying. They could not, of themselves, predict the resurrection. Although Jesus had brought Lazarus back to life, it was not enough. They needed the evidence of their own senses.

In 2016 Pope Francis declared Mary Magdalene to be the "apostle to the apostles" because "she is the witness to the risen Christ and announces the message of the Lord's resurrection just like the rest of the apostles". Interestingly, it was only then, two thousand years after the event, that her feast was officially given the same status as those of the apostles. Talk about a "glass ceiling" – it even applies to female saints!

When we think about it, if the apostles had not expected a woman to tell them of the resurrection – which they had not really expected in any case – it also shows how the most unlikely people are able to turn our own lives upside down, inside out and back to front. God uses the most unexpected messengers to pass on the most important messages we are ever likely to hear. Sometimes it might be a child's innocent remark that suddenly appears to have the most amazing profundity and stops us in our tracks. Jesus had told his disciples that he would rise on the third day, but they didn't understand what he was saying. Even the raising of Lazarus does not seem to have sparked the idea that Jesus was prefiguring his own resurrection. Of course, it made sense in hindsight, but it's easy to be wise after the event. Mary Magdalene was the first witness to the resurrection, but she also teaches us that we should be alert and listening to all the unexpected messengers who, knowingly or unknowingly, reveal to us our amazing God

HE IS RISEN INDEED. ALLELUIA!