

**Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady
Old Harlow, Essex CM17 0HA**

01279 434203

harlowold@dioceseofbrentwood.org

www.catholicchurchoftheassumption.co.uk

**BULLETIN C 25 – 15TH MAY 2022
FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

My dear brothers and sisters,

In his 2014 message for the World Day for Migrants and Refugees Pope Francis wrote, ‘We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees... are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved’. The events of recent weeks have prompted the Bishops of England and Wales to issue a statement, setting out our Catholic response. It really is quite simple, all men, women and children are created in the image and likeness of God and we are required to love them as ourselves. I have posted the Bishops statement on our website and commend its content to you.

A second document our bishops released this week concerns the return of the obligation to attend mass on Sundays and Holy Days. Now that all the restrictions imposed on us during the pandemic have been lifted it is time for Catholics, who have not already done so, to return to attending mass in person in church. They go on to say *“We understand there will still be some members of our congregations who, for reasons of health, do not feel safe enough to return to Mass. It has always been the understanding of the Church that when the freedom of any Catholic to attend Mass in person is impeded for a serious reason, because of situations such as ill health, care for the sick or legitimate fear, this is not a breach of the Sunday Obligation.”* To accommodate the needs of such people in our parish we shall continue to live stream mass and to minister Holy Communion to the sick or housebound in their homes. Again you can find the full text of the bishops’ statement on our website.

“All you need is love”

God bless

Fr. John

TIMES OF MASSES THIS WEEK

Sun	15	5 th of Easter	1000 Sung Mass 1200 Mass & Baptism 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Henry O’Leary (INT) Peace in Ukraine
Tue	17	feria of Eastertime	1900 Mass	Survivors of sexual abuse
Wed	18	feria of Eastertime	1000 Mass 1020 Adoration 1300 Marriage of Joseph & Damalie	Joseph & Damalie (INT)
Thu	19	St. Dunstan	1000 Mass	visually impaired people
Fri	20	feria of Eastertime	1000 Mass	
Sun	22	6 th of Easter	1000 Sung Mass 1200 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish

GOSPEL REFLECTION

“All You Need Is Love” is one of the most famous songs by The Beatles. It was written in 1967 for a television programme called *Our World*, the first to be broadcast live to a global audience. Over 400 million people from twenty-five countries tuned in to watch it. The Beatles had been asked for a song that people of every nation could understand, which is why the lyrics are simple and repetitive: “All you need is love, love. Love is all you need...”

The song’s writer, John Lennon, was not the first to offer that message to the world. Almost two thousand years earlier, another John had uttered similar words to the Christians of his day. He was St John the Evangelist, thought to have been the author of today’s second reading and Gospel. By tradition, St John lived to a very great age. When he became too frail to walk, his disciples would carry him to church. By now his voice was weak, but people kept begging him for a few words, because he was the last living link with the Lord Jesus. So St John would raise himself up on his stretcher. “Little children, love one another!” he would say. It was always the same thing and people started to tire of it. “Teacher, why do you always say this?” they complained. And the old man would reply, “Because the Lord commanded it, and if you keep that commandment, even if you do nothing else, it is sufficient.”

Today’s Gospel recalls the moment when the Lord gave that commandment to his followers. They were a diverse group, these disciples of Jesus, often at odds with one another. Jesus seems to have deliberately chosen people unlikely to form natural bonds of affection, as though their differences somehow commended them as champions of his way of love. “Love one another,” he urged them, “just as I have loved you.” He called this his “new” commandment, though there was already one very like it, for it was a requirement of the Jewish Law to love your neighbour as yourself. The new commandment, however, went much further. Jesus was asking his followers, not just to treat people as they themselves would like to be treated, but to treat people kindly *at whatever cost* to themselves. To love as Jesus loved was to love the unlovable; to forgive the unforgivable; to *keep on* loving and forgiving, whether or not it might be reciprocated.

The disciples struggled with this radical redefinition of neighbourly love. They did not always approve of the people Jesus embraced and forgave. They were dismayed to see what it cost him. When he stooped to wash their own feet, Peter objected. Jesus, it seemed, was ready to suffer any amount of humiliation, even to risk his own life – and now he was expecting them to do the same. Today’s Gospel, however, makes it clear: there is nothing shameful about serving others. On the contrary, it is a glorious thing.

In that so-called “Summer of Love” of 1967, The Beatles’ song “All You Need Is Love” became something of an anthem. Many young visionaries of that post-war generation dreamed of a new world, of not only a peaceful society, but a more permissive one. “Make love, not war!” they protested. Self-indulgence, however, was not what Jesus had in mind. Citizens of the kingdom of God were to share their lives in mutual fidelity, reverence and service. Indeed, when Jesus commanded people to love one another as he did, he was asking his followers to emulate God. That meant reaching out to people who were marginalised and stigmatised, welcoming home the sinner, feeding those who were hungry and caring for those who were sick. It made Jesus an outcast. Yet divine love knows no bounds: it is all grace, and whenever any of us imitate that seemingly impossible way of loving, God is seen in us and honoured.

We live in an exciting age of rapid change, an age in which many have begun to embrace diversity and value people equally. Yet our Lord is still commanding us, his disciples, to go beyond the social norms of our day. He commands us, not just to love, but to love *as he loves*; to treat people well, whoever they are, and even if it creates difficulties for ourselves. We need not worry what other people will think. It is at such selfless moments that, in God’s eyes, we appear not foolish, but glorious.