

**Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady  
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**BULLETIN C 26 – 22<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2022  
SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

My dear brothers and sisters,

I shall be away leading the Pilgrimage to Knock this week so there will not be many weekday masses. However, as Thursday is the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, which is a Holy Day of Obligation, there will be a mass at 10am. There will also be an evening mass at St. Thomas More at 7.30pm.

We could do with a volunteer to take the donated groceries to the Food Bank, every two to three weeks would be a great help.

Plans for the Anniversary Mass on 2<sup>nd</sup> June at 7.00pm are well in hand. The Warwick Street Organist and Singers are coming to sing parts of the Byrd Mass for four voices, as well as joining our choir to sing the hymns. The Party afterwards is taking shape, we need lots of homemade cakes. Are you coming?

God bless  
Fr. John

**TIMES OF MASSES THIS WEEK AND NEXT**

Sun	22	6 <sup>th</sup> of Easter	1000 Sung Mass 1200 Mass 1800 Mass	Mollie Atkinson (RIP) People of the Parish Peace in Ukraine
Thu	26	Ascension Day	1000 Mass	People of the Parish
Sun	29	7 <sup>th</sup> of Easter	1000 Sung Mass & Baptism 1200 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Peace in Ukraine
Wed	1	St. Justin	1000 Mass 1020 Adoration 1300 Burial of Ashes	Sadie Bell (RIP) Sadie Bell
Thu	2	40 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary	1900 Sung Mass	In thanksgiving
Fri	3	St. Charles Lwanga	1000 Mass	Faith Brewer (RIP)
Sun	5	Pentecost Sunday	1000 Mass 1200 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Bridle & Lindley families (RIP)

## GOSPEL REFLECTION

The European football tournament that took place in the summer of 2021, having been postponed for a year because of the pandemic, will for many years be a memory of pride and shame for the English. A talented young team and its humble, thoughtful manager led England through a summer of extraordinary hope after a winter of pandemic-driven anxiety and depression. They were joyful in victory and gracious in defeat, unlike a small minority of fans whose hate-fuelled racist abuse and xenophobic thuggery brought shame to them and tarnished the name of the country they claimed to support.

Many of the England team were of migrant origin and showed gratitude for the country that welcomed their families. One of the players, Marcus Rashford, led a campaign for free school meals that illustrated a spirit of compassion and generosity rooted in gratitude and a well-deserved pride in his own achievements and those of his single mother, who brought her family up in poverty. All attempts to exclude and divide are rooted in fear and prejudice. If this is clearly illustrated in football, there is also a lesson here for the Church to reflect on.

Today's readings all contain teaching for us as individuals, but much more for us as the body of Christ in the world. The early Church struggled to discern between true and false teaching and to preserve the community from all attempts to divert attention from Jesus' unequivocal teaching about welcoming sinners into the kingdom. While it is important that we continue to discern where we are being led in Spirit and truth, Pope Francis has been equally unequivocal in his insistence that we cannot turn the Church into a private members' club, where those on the inside wear their virtue like a medal. In the early Church, sinners would be excluded from the community for years, their penitent status obvious for all to see. Every attempt we make to separate those we consider sinners from participation in the gathered community is similar in spirit to this excluding attitude.

The first reading, from Acts, gives us an illustration of this. It tells of an argument in the early Church about whether those who were not of the Jewish faith should have strict rules about membership imposed upon them. This quarrel about admitting pagans to the early Church is the first of many attempts throughout the Church's history to control and exclude access to grace. We see it today in arguments about admittance to the sacraments. The Church is a field hospital, not a fortress. The sacraments are medicine for those who are sick, not a reward for those who are virtuous. We are called to the freedom of the children of God, but we repeatedly prefer the security of slavery to the responsibility that comes with such freedom.

It is part of the challenge of discernment that we have to try to balance the teaching of the Church with Christ's call to freedom, mercy and compassion. The 2015 Synod on the Family wrestled with these thorny issues as it looked at the exclusion from the sacraments of people who are divorced and remarried or those in same-sex relationships. There is no easy answer to these questions, but the teaching of the Gospels is quite clear, as is Pope Francis' stated preference for a "bruised, hurting and dirty" Church.

The story from Acts, like the vision of John in the Apocalypse, from which we heard an extract in our second reading, serves to remind us that we are guests at Christ's table at the Eucharistic feast, not hosts or bouncers, controlling who is welcome. Christ himself is the feast and the one who issues the invitations. Every member of the Church is a sinner, welcomed by his compassion and mercy. The Spirit, whose coming Christ promises in the Gospel, brings peace and drives out fear. But it is fear that drives human attempts to exclude and control, whether in society's many prejudices like racism, sexism and homophobia, or within the Church when we judge others to be "outsiders". The challenge to us is to look at the root of our judgements and to overcome prejudice with courage and fear with freedom. In God's house all are welcome.