

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

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**BULLETIN C 36 – 31ST JULY 2022
18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

My dear brothers and sisters,

We send our Congratulations to Abigail and Jake who were married in our church on Wednesday, we pray that the happiness of their wedding day will continue to grow and deepen for the rest of their lives together.

Have you bought your ticket for our next Social event is the Strawberry Tea on Sunday 14th August, Our parish festival of The Assumption of Our Lady. Tickets are the same as last year and available after any mass from Sunday, £5 Adults and £2 for Children.

The Sonare Choir will be giving another concert on Saturday 24th September at 2.30pm, book the date in your diary now. We will also be hosting a Coffee Morning in aid of MacMillan Cancer Care on Friday 30th September.

God bless you all,
Fr. John

TIMES OF MASSES THIS WEEK

Sun	31	18 th of Ordinary Time	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	Special Intention People of the Parish
Tue	2	St. Eusebius	1900 Mass	Peace in Ukraine
Wed	3	feria	1000 Mass 1020 Adoration	
Thu	4	St. John Vianney	1000 Mass	Parish Priests
Sun	7	19 th Ordinary Time	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Peace in Ukraine

TIMES OF RECONCILIATION THIS WEEK

Fr John will be available this week to hear confession on Tuesday at 6.30pm and Wednesday at 10.30am, or by appointment.

MASS INTENTIONS

We have many spaces for mass intentions, if you would like mass offered for someone, living or dead, or for a particular intention please use the envelopes provided.

GOSPEL REFLECTION

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens is one of the best-loved Christmas stories ever written. First published in 1846, it is thought to have had the astounding effect of renewing the celebration of the feast itself throughout Britain. It does not refer directly to the original Christmas story but takes as its central point the Christmas message of peace and goodwill to all. In the course of one night, the miser Scrooge is subjected to visitations from the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future. These experiences put Scrooge in touch with the bright young man he once was, the terrifyingly destructive presence he has become and the devastation that lies ahead both for him and for others if he does not change his ways.

The effect when he awakes from this series of nightmares on Christmas Day is that of a total transformation. He emerges as a personality now full of joy and kindness and even a sense of mischief. His ghostly guides have put him in touch with his deeper and more real self. It has taken a mixture of remembered joy and anxious fear to achieve the change, but the new Scrooge becomes a symbol of how we should live in generous concern both for our families and for our neighbours and colleagues. Where there was meanness there is now openness, penny-pinching is replaced by extravagance, and disdain is replaced by delight.

At a first reading of the book of Ecclesiastes, we might think the author is throwing up his hands at the absurdity of life and declaring human life to be nothing but vanity. A closer reading reveals he is trying to tackle the same issue as the one Jesus faced. There was a general belief at the time that wealth was a sign both of God's blessing and that you had lived a good life. If you were poor, you must have done something wrong. It is a view Jesus struggled to reverse even with his own disciples.

The story of the rich man building bigger barns is only found in St Luke's Gospel as he is the Gospel writer most concerned with the dangers of riches and the need to come to the support of those who are poor. Jesus isn't a killjoy. He enjoys feasting with both rich and poor people, but he is only too aware that the pursuit of money and material wealth gets in the way of his message. If we make material possessions the main aim of our life, it will be difficult for us to think of others, especially those who are in greatest need. We can become addicted to wanting more and more rather than using our success to remedy the inequalities that surround us. The story of the man building bigger barns has a touch of the ghost of Christmas future.

We live in a capitalist world. Most of us don't fully understand what this implies but, consciously or unconsciously, it does affect the way we live. In such a world the economy is the central concern, and the economy is only deemed successful if it grows. In order to grow, there has to be a constant increase in productivity and sales – the "bigger barns" – and a constant increase in consumption, namely people willing to purchase such products. Endless advertising tries to ensure this pattern is maintained. Providing a fair share for all in this merry-go-round is not easy and has never been achieved. Does the state interfere to enable such a balance or not? As individuals, how do we express our Christian beliefs when the pressure is to build our own barns at others' expense?

As the power lies in the hands of rich people, it can be difficult for them to share more generously, as this feels like letting go of control. Those who are poor may feel envious of what they do not have, especially as advertising presents all goods as being available to all. Those in the middle can swing between fear and greed. The miracle is that so many people still manage to put their energies into concern for others and seek to build up community in whatever way they can. These are the ones who listen to the inner voice of love that expresses the human heart at its best and most resilient. As Tiny Tim exclaims in *A Christmas Carol*: "God bless us, every one!"