

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

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BULLETIN C 9 – 23RD JANUARY 2022 THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

My dear brothers and sisters,

Pope Francis has called the Catholic Church worldwide to listen to the Holy Spirit talking to the Church in our local areas. Parishes, schools, charities, religious orders and in any way that two or three are gathered, we are invited to share about Our Journey Together. We are asked to prayerfully reflect on how to Live Communion, Achieve Participation, and be open to Mission. As we have coffee after mass on a Thursday, which is quite well attended, I propose that this week we will have a conversation together. Both Bishop Alan and Mgr Keith Newton have asked us to engage with this process in the near future. I do invite anyone to come and join us after mass this Thursday, your ideas are important to our parish. If there are enough people who can only make evenings and would like to be part of this process, please let me know and we can arrange for a later group.

We now have a new stock of "Mass Offerings" envelopes for those who would like a mass said for a particular person or need. The Bishop recently wrote "I have been asked on a number of occasions what the level of Mass stipends should be. As you will be aware there is no stipulated offering and I am sure that if an offering for Mass is made the priest concerned would be happy to accept it. However, it is worth noting that the stipend is an offering to associate the donor with the sacrifice; a means to provide the requisites used for the Mass and, traditionally, to keep the priest for a day. A Mass stipend of £10 is suggested for the but we must never give the impression that we are charging for the Sacraments and that it is a voluntary offering"

God bless, Fr. John

PS. Although wearing Masks will no longer be mandatory from Thursday this week onwards, it is felt that in the interest of each other we should continue to wear them in church for the foreseeable future. Some of our parishioners are still anxious about Covid and we owe it to each other to be mindful of them.

TIMES OF MASS DURING THIS WEEK

Sun	23	3rd in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass	People of the Parish
			1800 Mass	Smith Family (RIP)
Tue	25	Conversion of St. Paul	1900 Mass	W & T Lason (RIP)
Wed	26	Ss. Timothy & Titus	1000 Mass	John & Eileen Love (RIP)
			1020 Adoration	
Thu	27	feria	1000 Mass	Vera White (RIP)
Fri	28	St. Thomas Aquinas	1000 Mass	for Seminarians
Sun	30	4 th in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass	Judith Hopkinson (RIP)
			1800 Mass	People of the Parish

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Fr. John is available to hear confession on Tuesday at 6.30pm and Wednesday at 10.30am

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Beginnings are important. The first line of a book, or the first scene of a film, can determine its success or failure. Authors and directors spend a lot of time working on that opening. Some are truly memorable. Perhaps we remember such lines or scenes that stick in our minds long after we've read the book or seen the movie.

In today's Gospel reading, we have Luke's beginning: in effect we have two beginnings. There's the actual opening of Luke's work, when he sets out what he's intending to do. Then we skip a few chapters further on, to the focus of his story, with Luke's account of the beginning of Jesus' adult ministry, in the synagogue at Nazareth.

According to Luke, how did Jesus choose to launch his ministry? He went back home, to his own town. In the synagogue at Nazareth he stood in front of the people and read the passage from the prophet Isaiah. It summed up the heart of his mission: "good news to the poor... liberty to captives... to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free". The people liked what they heard. The initial reaction was positive. He spoke with authority; here was a man you could believe in, not like the usual teachers and preachers, not like the establishment types with their vested interests.

But if you look ahead to next week's Gospel, you can see how quickly the attitude changed. You can almost hear the whirring of the people's minds. This man speaks about "good news for the poor"; but what does that mean for us, who are comfortably off? He speaks of liberty for captives; but perhaps we'd prefer to lock them up and throw away the key. He speaks of freedom for the downtrodden; but do we really want, can we afford, a society where everyone is treated the same? And people's self-interest begins to take over; it's not long before they're trying to get rid of this man who talks about such things.

How do we react to Jesus' message today? Because it's not just a message from history, although Luke is careful to set it in historical context, to remind us that it's based on eyewitness evidence. What Jesus is doing, as his opening, is not just setting out his own agenda, but proclaiming the word of God. He goes back to the prophets to proclaim that this is part of God's plan from ages past, part of what's called salvation history. At the heart of this plan is the word of God, revealed in the scriptures. Today's first reading takes us back to the time when the people of Israel had returned to their homeland after years of exile in Babylon. Their return was marked by a public reading to the whole people of the "Book of the Law", the words of the Lord their God, which had been revealed to them, the very heart of their religion. In his apostolic letter instituting this Sunday as the Sunday of the Word of God, Pope Francis commented: "These words contain a great teaching... The Bible is the book of the Lord's people, who, in listening to it, move from dispersion and division towards unity. The word of God unites believers and makes them one people."

Jesus speaks of himself as the fulfilment of prophecy. God has come to be with God's people, as was promised from of old. Jesus looks to the future, too, because he is setting out the manifesto, the mission statement of his Church. It's based both on the word of God – spoken of by Pope Francis as "the inexhaustible riches contained in that constant dialogue between the Lord and his people" – and on the Spirit of God. Jesus is able to fulfil this ancient prophecy because the Spirit has been given to him. He proclaims God's will in the power of the Spirit. In the power of the Spirit he will fulfil God's will, bringing "good news to the poor... liberty to captives... to the blind new sight", freedom to the downtrodden. It's what God has anointed him to do. And it's something that can only be achieved in the power of God's Spirit. Today Jesus invites us, who share that Spirit through our baptism, to be part of his mission. He went back to his hometown to begin it. He calls us to do something similar: if we're to share his mission, this is where we start, among the people we know.

Headteacher

Holy Cross Primary School, Harlow

Starting salary L17 – L23 (£63,745 - £73,660). Required for September 2022. The Governors of Holy Cross invite applications from experienced, enthusiastic and suitably-qualified practising Catholics, to play a key role in the leadership and management of our school to continue to build on our successes. Deadline for applications: **12:00 pm on Monday 21st February 2022**. For further information please contact Karen Slater, PA to Headteacher, on 01279 424452 to arrange this. Alternatively if you would like an application pack please contact Karen Slater by email: karenslater@holycross-pri.essex.sch.uk. Further details of these vacancies and other are available from the diocesan website <https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/education/vacancies/school-vacancies/>