

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

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BULLETIN C 50 – 6TH NOVEMBER 2022 32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

My dear brothers and sisters,

First of all can I say that I am delighted that the parish continued to function so well during my recent holiday, thanks to a few, especially Fr. Paul Kerner who generously came and looked after the masses for us.

Sadly I came back to the news that Terry Handorff had died whilst I was away. I can now confirm that his Funeral Mass will be here on Friday 25th November at 11.30am. Please do keep him, Tricia and her family in your prayers at this very painful time.

I also came back with a nasty chest infection, which now that I'm medicating is getting better. Thank you to those who showed they cared, yes even the bossy ones!

I need to appoint, in the next few weeks a "Parish Health and Safety Officer" to work with me in making sure we are compliant with all the legislation. I understand that joint training will be given – any volunteers?

Next week I'm away in Walsingham with the priests of the Ordinariate on a conference, some people have all the fun!

God bless

Fr. John

PS Last Sunday's Retiring Collection raised £172-05 for BCCS – Many thanks

Almighty and eternal God,
from whose love in Christ we cannot be parted,
either by death or life:
hear our prayers and thanksgivings
for all whom we remember this day;
fulfil in them the purpose of your love;
and bring us all, with them, to your eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

TIMES OF MASSES

Sun	6	32 nd Ordinary Time	1000 Mass 1200 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Claire Rowell (INT) John Francis Kelleher (RIP)
Sun	13	33 rd OT - Remembrance	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	War Dead People of the Parish

GOSPEL REFLECTION

The British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was once asked what it was like to stand in the House of Commons at the despatch box and to face the enemy. Churchill said, "Do you mean the people sitting on the

opposite side of the House? They're not the enemy: they're the opposition. The enemy are sitting behind me." Of course it was a joke, but one that political party leaders throughout the world might understand. A variant of this is the adage, "Keep your friends close to you, and your enemies closer." Too cynical? Perhaps, but it is wise to remember that there may not always be a great distance separating cynicism and truth. A common theme in theatrical and operatic works is the tragedy of an important figure relying on a particular friend or servant, only to find, at the end of the story, that the trusted one is nothing more than a cynical traitor, happy to betray them.

Given the prevalence of this particular feature of life, it is not at all surprising to find that prominent leaders in various biblical settings suffer betrayal at the hands of those whom they had trusted implicitly. Christians are well aware of one of these in the life of Jesus: his betrayal at the hands of one of his twelve closest associates, Judas Iscariot. Perhaps the biggest shock is that religious leaders would take any and every opportunity to put an end to Jesus, whose utterances were often directed against the hypocrisy of the religious leaders of his time.

You would be forgiven for thinking that surely nothing terribly problematic should arise from a theological difference of position; but again, just think how many wars have been started with religion at their heart – crusades in the Middle Ages, the Reformation throughout Europe – and to this day people are being executed in the name of religion.

Jesus had become such a challenge to the religious authorities that they were prepared to have him killed. In today's Gospel, we learn first and foremost that the major religious groups – such as the Pharisees and Sadducees – felt challenged by Jesus' teaching, not least because his teaching was something he put into practice in his own life. In regard to the question they asked him today, Jesus was nearer in theology to Pharisees than he was to the Sadducees, who had no belief in the resurrection of the dead. Their reason for this was that in the so-called books of Moses, the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, there is no mention of the resurrection of the dead.

Many Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, and this is a reminder to us that they were progressive in their theology, and in fact shared many insights with Jesus. The sad fact about the Sadducees, who belonged mostly to the ranks of the Temple priests, was that they clung to ancient expressions of theology. This differentiation between Pharisees and Sadducees is important to us today. It is necessary for us to recognise the wealth of the religious teaching of the past, and to recognise that through the development of theology, we can develop our own faith too. The letter to the Hebrews has a lovely expression, where it says, "The word of God is something alive and active." It is not something printed in a book that cannot be altered; it is not some kind of monolithic structure where words carved on it can never be rewritten. The Word of God in our tradition is not a text, but a person. It is Jesus who is the Word of God made flesh. This is, of course, exactly how Jesus is described in the opening chapter of the Gospel of John.

Sadducees would not accept Jesus for who he was because they were not prepared to move beyond a very literal interpretation of the first five books of the Old Testament. Their understanding of God was, therefore, very limited indeed. They avoided the insights of the prophets and others. They cut themselves off from anything new being revealed by God – in Jesus' case, the revelation of God *in* Jesus. If only they could have had the openness of St Paul, who was prepared to broaden his theological outlook by listening to the one who is the Word of God made flesh, and who alone can reveal to us the things of God.