

**PARISH PRAYER GROUP:** We are inviting parishioners to join our prayer group, which will meet on the last Monday of the month at 7.30pm in the Church to pray for the intentions of the parish and diocese. Our first meeting is on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February. All are welcome!

**EPPING FOREST FOODBANK DONATIONS:** Thank you to all parishioners who donated items for the Foodbank in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Your response was so generous. Your donations are needed as much as ever now by people in our area who are struggling to put food on the table. Basic staple items are always welcome including the unbranded supermarket basic ranges which can make your generous donations go even further. In February they are in urgent need of the following items: sponge puddings, UHT milk, powdered milk, tinned carrots/peas/potatoes, long life juice, instant mash, tinned meat, tinned spaghetti, rice pudding and female deodorant. Thank you! You can also keep up to date with the Foodbank via their Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/EppingForestFoodbank/](http://www.facebook.com/EppingForestFoodbank/)

**PARISH REPOSITORY:** There is a selection of religious items and gifts available at the Repository. Religious cards for all occasions (mass cards, birthday & anniversary cards, get well cards, etc), and many other items. We are looking for some new volunteers to help Teresa; if you can help on a Saturday evening or Sunday morning, please see Fr. John or Teresa Wallace. Please Phone the Presbytery – Tel No: 0208 508 3492

**ALTAR SOCIETY:** We are in desperate need for some new members to join. If you can give an hour a month in helping to keep our Church clean and tidy; there are many different jobs to do through the Altar Society. please see Fr. John or Sharon Fitzmaurice.

**PARISH GREETERS:** We are looking for some more volunteers to help the Parish Welcome Greeters at all the weekend masses. If you can give some time before mass to welcome parishioners and distribute hymns books & newsletters, we would be most grateful. This is a very valuable ministry. Please see Fr. John

**IN CASES OF EMERGENCY:** Tuesday is usually Fr. John's Day Off. In Cases of emergency please call one of the local parishes, either in Epping – Tel: 01992 572516, or the St. Thomas of Canterbury Friary at Woodford Green – Tel: 020 8504 1688. This would also apply if Fr. John is away for a few days break or on Retreat. All the local funeral directors have a contact number for Fr. John if a funeral needs to be arranged in his absence.

Dear Friends in Christ,

First Sunday of Lent, 2020

The Holy spirit led Jesus into the desert for forty days to be tempted and tested. During Lent we too are led by the spirit into the mystery of Jesus' sojourn in the desert. 'By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert (CCC540). Lent, then, is a journey into the desert. We too, during this holy season, can expect to be tempted and tested.

The name Satan means 'adversary'. In the book of Job, we are given a vivid picture of Satan in God's heavenly court, along with all the other angels, where he has the role of accuser or prosecutor. The Scriptures identify Satan as the serpent in the Garden of Eden who tempted Adam and Eve and, therefore, as the origin of sin and temptation. What the Scriptures and tradition make known is that humankind has a mortal enemy who, although a finite being created by God, is in a desperate struggle to overthrow God's reign, usurp his Lordship and lead his creation into darkness and death. On Easter Sunday each of us will recite our baptismal promises and in doing so renew them. Bear this in mind as we move through lent because, as you will be aware, a renewal of our baptismal promises involves us actively, freely and voluntarily rejecting Satan.



Lent is also a time for us to discover anew and afresh the gospel, the Good News which Jesus began to proclaim immediately after his time of testing. What is the Good News? The Good News is a message in two parts; the first part is to repent, and the second part is to believe in the gospel. We walk together on this road marked out for us by the church and take up our call to stand firm and resist the devil, knowing that he will flee, and embracing freely and with love the gospel, which is Christ with us and in us, the hope of salvation.

'In these days, therefore, let us add something beyond the wonted measure of our service, such as private prayers and abstinence in food and drink. Let each one, over and above the measure prescribed for him, offer God something of our own free will in the joy of the Holy Spirit. (St. Benedict)

Dear Friends in Christ,

First Sunday of Lent

As we have entered this Holy Lenten Season, let us embrace the disciplines of Lent of – Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. The personal decisions we make during this special period are important. It is a Penitential Season, meaning that we are examining our lives in every aspect to see where improvements can take place. We are encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation throughout Lent. With regards to personal prayer; there are many things that we can do; – remember to pray our morning and evening prayers, read a chapter of the bible each day, attend an additional mass once a week (see Lenten Mass schedule), attend the Stations of the Cross on Friday's, Holy Hour & Stations on Sunday's. With regards to Fasting – this weekend we will receive our CAFOD envelopes; next Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March is Cafod Family Fast Day; what we save in our fasting we place in our envelopes and give to Cafod. You may like to donate to the Food Bank – once again our boxes will be present on the sanctuary during Lent for your offerings.



PRAYER

FASTING

ALMSGIVING

We have so many opportunities to do good in this life; one act of human kindness can change a person's life. One kind word can transform a person's day. Perhaps during this Holy Season, we can practice one act of human kindness every day. You will be amazed at the difference it will make to you and to others. And as the Gospel told us on Ash Wednesday: 'The Lord who sees all that is done in secret will reward you...!'

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS:** The traditional devotion during the Lenten Season. I would encourage all our parishioners to attend the Stations of the Cross either on Fridays at 11.45am or Sundays at 5.00pm. This beautiful devotion follows the last journey made by Jesus on Good Friday to Calvary.

**LENTEN COURSE:** The God who Speaks – 'The Pig Picture Course', exploring the Sacred Scriptures to understand and deepen our awareness of God. Course dates: 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30pm in the Parish Retreat. Study Book with personal Diary & CD costs £10, but it's not imperative that you have this! Please consider coming along!

**RITE OF ELECTION:** Will take place at Bentwood Cathedral today. We have one candidate this year Bianca Felton. Please keep her in your prayers as she prepares to be received into full communion with the Catholic Faith.

May God bless you all throughout Lent



**FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PROGRAMME:** Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020, at 10.00am in the Parish Hall. Preparations for the Sacrament of Reconciliation continue. Reconciliation will take place on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March at 10.00am in the Church. It is imperative that the children attend weekly mass.

**RCIA PROGRAMME:** will continue Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 8.00pm in the Presbytery. Theme: PRAYER – Is it necessary? Methods of Prayer. If you know of anyone who may be interested in the Roman Catholic Faith, please contact Fr. John at the Presbytery Tel No: 020 8508 3492



**PARISH PARTNERSHIP YOUTH MASS:** will take place on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March at 6.00pm at St. Edmund's. We hope and pray that as many of our young people will be involved in the celebration. We will need readers, singers, musicians etc. the more the merrier! Please start spreading the word about this third Mass to everyone and we hope to see many of you at the meeting! There will be Pizza & refreshments after Mass in the Parish Hall

**DAFFODILS FOR MOTHER'S DAY:** Through the Forming Intentional Disciples group, we have decided once again this year to give daffodils on Mother's Day 22<sup>nd</sup> March. Very kindly last year there were several sponsors to help us buy flowers. Could I make an appeal again this year? You can use your gift aid donation envelopes and leave them off at the Presbytery. Thanking you in anticipation.



**REDEDICATION OF ENGLAND AS THE DOWRY OF MARY:** Will take place on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March. England has always had a very special devotion to Our Blessed Lady. This Rededication as the 'Dowry of Mary' hopefully will evoke a resurgence in faith and be a catalyst for on-going Evangelisation. The gift we will give to Mary is our personal faith as we seek to gain her prayers and protection as Mother of God. We have all been encouraged to learn and pray the Angelus at the end of each mass.

**YOUR WEEKLY OFFERTORY:** Is your personal gift to God and reflects gratitude for everything he gives to us. You may have noticed for the past number of weeks that the offertory was below on thousand pounds. This is quite alarming as the income is not meeting the outgoing monthly bills.

**BAPTISMS IN THE PARISH:** If you have a child due for Baptism please let me know as soon as possible. To avoid any disappointment with dates, contact the Presbytery to book your date. If you are first-time parents, you need to contact Sharon Chalk, who will organise a Baptismal Preparation of two sessions, and then I will come and visit you in your homes. Please don't forget to collect your Baptismal Information Form.



**ASH WEDNESDAY** is on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and marks the beginning of the Holy Season of Lent. This Penitential Season is given to us by the Church to help us prepare ourselves spiritually for the 'Great Holy Week', which retraces the Lord Jesus' last days here on earth. We journey with Him through His Passion, Death & Resurrection. This is a familiar journey, and as Catholic Christians, let us make a very special effort to enter this Holy Season with renewed faith and vigour!

**PRAYER:** The Three main disciplines of Lent are Prayer, Fasting & Almsgiving (Charity). These next Forty days will give us the opportunity to really make a special effort in our spiritual lives with our personal prayer. Why not put aside a few moments every day as your very special prayer time! We have little Prayer Reflection Books available at £1 each called 'WALK WITH ME', these can be kept in your inside pocket or a lady's handbag and can be used to help with prayer. As you know we have a library at the back of St. Edmund's. There are many spiritual books that can be borrowed. (Please kindly return the books when you've read them).

**FRIDAY FASTING:** Was restored in England & Wales. Personal Penance identifies us with the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. Friday has always been the traditional Fast Day, as it reminds us of Good Friday, the day on which the Lord gave himself completely for the Salvation of Humanity. The re-establishment of this Friday Fast means that we abstain from the eating of meat every Friday! (not just during Lent). A little sacrifice in our diet once a week will certainly not harm our health. As families, it would be good to pray grace before & after meals together. These are practical and visible ways of our personal self-sacrifice!

**ALMSGIVING:** or works of Charity have always been associated with the Catholic Faith. We have a special Fast Day for CAFOD during Lent, Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020. This is a very practical way to associate ourselves with those who are far less fortunate than ourselves. You may like to adopt a Third World Project, or, you may know of someone who is housebound and might like to visit them or shop for them. Also, FOOD BANK boxes will be on the Sanctuary once again throughout Lent. Anything that reaches out to someone else in charity can only be a good thing! Please make a very special effort to enter this Holy Season of Lent in faith and Love!

May God Bless You All,

Dear Friends in Christ

Seventh Sunday of the Year

**PREPARING FOR LENT:** This year we will have a Lenten Programme of talks, which are based on Scripture. Our Forming Intentional Disciples team advocated this programme. Lent is the time of year when we can embrace

certain disciplines, but also at the same time do something special or extra during the Holy Season. The Programme we will use is called 'The Big Picture' – It is an inspirational Bible course, explaining God's plan of Salvation for humanity. When you begin to understand the Sacred Scriptures, it opens a whole new world of discovery; the power of God's Word can take root deeply in our lives and transform us. In this Year of the Word - 'The God who Speaks', all parishes have been encouraged to explore the Sacred Scriptures. This is St. Edmund's attempt to encourage as many parishioners as possible to attend this programme. Course dates: Wednesdays 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Commencing at 7.30pm in the Parish Retreat. Please to attend this course. The study book costs £10 with CD included. At the end of Mass, you will receive a little copy of Matthew's Gospel. We are in Year A of the Liturgical Calendar, the Year of Matthew's Gospel. Please use this throughout Lent.

**REDEDICATION OF ENGLAND AS THE DOWRY**

**OF MARY:** On Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March, England will be rededicated to the Dowry of Mary. This is a very ancient title dating back to the reign of St. Edward the Confessor; since this time and especially in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, the people in England were encouraged to have special devotion and honour to Our Lady. On the feast of Corpus Christi in 1381, King Richard II (1377-1399) dedicated England to Our Lady in a ceremony at Westminster Abbey as an act of thanksgiving for his kingdom being saved in the wake of the Peasants' Revolt of that year.



For nearly a thousand years the Marian Shrine of Walsingham has been a focal point for Pilgrims to show their love and respect to Our Blessed Lady. Unfortunately, during the Reformation the Shrine fell into desuetude. In 1934 the first National Pilgrimage since the Reformation took place once again, and since then Pilgrims in their thousands have made their way to the Shrine.

This Rededication as the 'Dowry of Mary' hopefully will evoke a resurgence in faith and be a catalyst for on-going Evangelisation. The gift we will give to Mary is our personal faith as we seek to gain her prayers and protection as Mother of God. We have all been encouraged to learn and pray the Angelus at the end of each mass

May God Bless You All

In the Diocese of Brentwood over the past three years, through the Stewards of the Gospel Programme, we are planning in all our parishes. Here, at St. Edmund's we also embarked upon the Forming Intentional Disciples Programme; this has enabled us to form a core group of parishioners who are totally representative and committed to the work of Evangelisation, making the Gospel Message known to everyone. During the past twelve months, there have been both spiritual and social events organised by the core group: Youth Masses, Historical Talk, Parish Walk in the Forest, Flower Festival, Christmas Gathering after the Saturday 6.00pm Mass, and other events. Manifestly, anything that can bring the community together can only be a good thing. We met recently and are now planning events for 2020. We are always looking for new interests; if you feel that you would like to contribute, and feel that you can help us, please do come to our next Forming Intentional Disciples Meeting on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February at 8.00pm in the Parish Hall. Also, our Parish Partnership of Loughton, Waltham Abbey & Epping continue to meet and plan.

We have several priests who are sick at present, and it is likely that there will be several retirements over the next couple of years; which is going to place a great stress on the remaining clergy. Therefore, the partnership arrangements will come into effect at various times over the next several years. With fewer priests, we are going to have to assume more responsibilities for than one parish. This is the changing face of the Church in this country, and we must adapt accordingly!

**YOUR WEEKLY OFFERTORY:** I'm a little concerned about the Weekly Offertory plummeting so dramatically over the past month; we have only been achieving a little over a thousand pounds each week. With the Monthly Diocesan Quota Of £2,200 being debited at the beginning of each month, and of course our Staff Salaries; at present the monthly income is not meeting the monthly outgoings. The utilities of heating, lighting, water on all the parish buildings are high. Insurance, general maintenance of all the buildings, repairs Would all parishioners kindly take these comments on board when you make your Weekly Offertory to Almighty God. Please use your Parish Gift Aid envelopes, as we can claim back 25p in the pound for your weekly offertory. If you forget your GA envelopes, there are spare envelopes in the porch of the church. If you would like to join the Gift Aid Scheme, there are applications also in the Porch. Continued thanks for your generosity.

*to the meeting as well! Please start spreading the word about this third Mass to everyone and we hope to see many of you at the meeting!*

**YOUTH MASS:** *Our next Youth Mass to be held at St. Edmund's, Loughton, 6pm, Sunday, 29th March, 2020: It has been agreed that we will hold this (our third) Mass for all the youth of our Loughton, Epping and Waltham parishes as detailed above. The arrangements will be largely the same as those of our earlier Masses and we hope that all the young people and others who did so much to make our previous Masses a success will be willing to get involved in the same way for this third Mass.*



*A planning meeting has been fixed for 7pm, Wednesday, 19th February in the Retreat room (above St. Edmund's Hall) and we hope that many young people from Loughton, **FIRST HOLY COMMUNION** Epping and Waltham Abbey who are interested in getting involved will come to this meeting. Choosing readers, hymns, music and other things will be part of the planning, so musicians, singers, readers and all kinds of other young helpers would be welcome! Some adult help will also be appreciated, so please do come*