

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 24th 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 January 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/

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,

7th Sunday of the Year 2020

We learn better if new teachings can be related or 'pegged' to what is already stored in our minds. The primary school child may be taught one way of understanding, for example, rainfall, but by secondary school a more sophisticated and scientifically accurate explanation will bring the child closer to the truth. In the light of further research in adult life, the student usually learns once more to discard some previously acquired 'knowledge' and to embrace a deeper understanding.

Jesus teaching in the same 'organic' way. He loved the law and would do nothing to discredit it, but his mission was to complete it. Thus, he often begins by reinforcing the familiar with 'You have heard that it was said...' The new understanding usually expands, rather than reduces, the message of the law, making it more radical and at the same time more loving. 'Be perfect...as your heavenly Father is perfect'.

That perfection includes loving not only your friends but also your enemies. We are called to radical commitment to the Good News, which involves more generous, more prayerful and more willing to set aside our own needs for the good of others. But loving our enemies? This sounds like an impossible goal – we often struggle to be in the same room as them! Jesus is trying to help us to see the world a little more as God sees it. For God, there is goodness within each person; every person you meet is created in the image and likeness of God. Our task is to make room for everyone. Firstly, because that is how God is, but secondly because we do not want to be in bondage to our resentment and thus fail to grow in our own relationship with the Lord of love. Our efforts will demand much more of us spiritually and even emotionally but will pay dividends in a new kind of interior freedom.



We have already seen this attitude lived out – in Jesus himself, who shows us what God is like. Jesus loved his enemies, forgave those who mocked him, scourged and crucified him. In this sense, we can say that the Sermon on the Mount predisposes us to live a life of self-giving, in imitation of Christ.

Dear Friends in Christ,

Seventh Sunday of the Year

ASH WEDNESDAY is on the 26th 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 6th 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,

LENTEN COURSE: The God who Speaks – 'The Pig Picture Course', exploring the Sacred Scriptures to understand and deepen our awareness of God. Course dates: 4th, 11th, 18th & 25th 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!



FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PROGRAMME: Sunday 9th February 2020, at 10.00am in the Parish Hall. Preparations for the Sacrament of Reconciliation now begin. Reconciliation will take place on Saturday 14th March at 10.00am in the Church. It is imperative that the children attend weekly mass.

RCIA PROGRAMME: will continue Thursday 27th February 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 29th 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 22nd 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.



NOTE TO EVERYONE IN THE CONTEMPORARY MUSIC GROUP: Our next practice will be on Monday, 24th February (6.30pm musicians / 7pm singers) to go over the hymns / music for the 11am Mass on Sunday, 1st March. NB We'd also like to look at the hymns and music suggested for the Youth Mass on 29th March so please do come to this important practice. Any new young (and not so young!) singers and musicians who would like to join us and be part of the Youth Mass would be made very welcome! Thank you.

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 4th, 11th, 18th & 25th 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.*

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.



REDEDICATION OF ENGLAND AS THE DOWRY OF MARY: *On Sunday 29th 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 13th 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

YOUR WEEKLY OFFERTORY: Is your personal gift to God and reflects gratitude for everything he gives to us. If you are a Taxpayer and would like to join the Parish Gift Aid Scheme, all we need is your name and address; Gift Aid forms are available in the porch of the church. Please ensure that you use your Weekly envelope, otherwise we are unable to claim the tax back. Thanks! The Weekly Offertory was very low last weekend. £960.00

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 10th 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.

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 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!*