



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF
OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION,
FOSTER AVENUE, BEESTON,
NOTTINGHAM, NG9 1AE
and
ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI CHURCH,
TAMWORTH ROAD,
LONG EATON, NG10 1DH



Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocese Trustees Company No. 7151646 Charity No. 1134449

PARISH PRIEST: Fr. Christopher A Thomas, Presbytery, 25 Foster Avenue, Beeston, NG9 1AE

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TIMES OF MASSES AND OTHER SERVICES: SIXTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR: B

Sixth Week of Ordinary Time: 14th – 20th February 2021 (Weekday Cycle Year I / Psalter Week II)

Saturday 13th February:	<i>Weekday Feria</i>	<p><i>Your Prayers are requested for those who are sick:</i></p> <p>Isobel Alana Barnes, Marica Borsos, Jessie Breame, Margaret Brown, Fr John Cairns, Pat Constable, Francesca Lina Craparotta, Jim & Margaret Dougan, Fr Theodore Gomes, Ann Harrison, Fr Peter Harvey, Andrea Hoffman, Breeda Keaney, Anne – Marie Reid, Canon Owen O’Neil, Alan Roberts, Simpson Family, Evelyn Venning and John Wilcox.</p> <p>HOSPITALS</p> <p>A number of priests are still trying to maintain an ‘on – call’ rota for City and QMC. This is strictly calls for Anointing of the Sick when someone is nearing the end of their life. The hospital will not call us out for a request for prayers or when someone has already died – these will be dealt with by a member of the Chaplaincy Team who may or may not be a Catholic minister. Holy Communion is not being taken into hospital by Eucharistic Ministers. Families should not contact a priest directly to visit their loved one in hospital – all requests need to go through the Ward and Chaplaincy Department. QMC 0115 924 9924 ext. 63799 or City 0115 969 1169.</p>
Mass;	Special Intention	
Sunday 14th February:	<i>Sixth Sunday of the Year: B</i>	
Mass;	Pro Populo; People of the Parish	
Monday 15th February:	<i>Weekday Feria</i>	
Mass;	Fr John Cairns Intentions (Dixon)	
Tuesday 16th February:	<i>Weekday Feria</i>	
Mass;	Mrs Martha Whitmore RIP (Foundation Mass)	
Wednesday 17th February:	<i>Ash Wednesday</i>	
Mass;	Holy Souls	
Thursday 18th February:	<i>Lenten Feria</i>	
Mass;	Pam Ashton RIP (Curtis)	
Friday 19th February:	<i>Lenten Feria</i>	
Mass;	Kathleen Dixon (Birthday Intention)	
Saturday 20th February:	<i>Lenten Feria</i>	
Mass;	Cyprie Hillier RIP (Anniversary) (Halliday)	
Sunday 21st February:	<i>First Sunday of Lent: B</i>	
Mass;	Pro Populo; People of the Parish	
UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED THE ABOVE MASSES WILL ALL BE SAID PRIVATELY!		
<p>The Parish Hall of Our Lady of the Assumption and the Parish Hall at St Francis of Assisi are closed to members of the public, until further notice. If you urgently wish to contact Fr Christopher please telephone 0115 922 8145 (at any reasonable time).</p> <p>For enquiries or to book a Mass Intention, please see me after the one of the Scheduled Public Masses or contact me by telephone. Mass Stipends and Parish Collection Envelopes can be posted or given at a later date.</p>		

Items for the newsletter can be given to Fr Christopher or e – mailed to frcathomas@live.com by WEDNESDAY of each week for inclusion in the next issue.

POOR CLARES: The Sisters send their thanks to you all for your continued support. They especially appreciate your help at this difficult time and wish you all a happy and healthy 2021. At present they are all keeping well and avoiding the virus. My next visit will be **Monday 22nd February 2021**. If you have a donation for the Sisters could you either leave it with Father Christopher or myself. Many thanks for your continued support. –*Diane Wilson*.

CHURCH MAINTENANCE: Work is continuing on the New Church Boiler and all seems to be going well. It is hoped that the work will be completed by the end of this coming week, after which we will have a safe, modern and efficient boiler to heat the Church for many years to come. All of this, as I am sure you can appreciate comes at a substantial cost (as it is a commercial boiler), which including VAT will be just over **£ 43, 000. 00**. As we do not have sufficient funds in the Parish to cover the full cost we have had to ask the Diocese for a loan of £ 25, 000. 00 (repayable over 5 years) to cover the shortfall. I am sure that that through your usual generosity and fund – raising the repayment of this loan will not be a problem. I am also extremely grateful to a number of people who have already made generous personal donations amounting to £ 3, 500. 00 towards the cost of this work and, a further £ 350. 00 received in the past few weeks from generous benefactors.

SYCAMORE COURSE: HOW TO PRAY: A Lent course of six sessions about Christian prayer and the adventure of the spiritual life. For those who are just beginning and also for those who have been praying a long time! Sycamore is an adaptable Catholic resource for sharing and growing in the faith. You are invited to explore one of the core parts of being a disciple of Jesus in the Church – Prayer. Each **Wednesday during Lent, starting on 24th February 2021 at 7:00 pm** join us on Zoom to watch a video input on a different topic of prayer: “*How to Pray; The Power of Prayer; The Bible; The Mass and; more*” and then discuss it with parishioners from both our Parishes. If you would like to sign up please visit: <https://forms.gle/Qx87VMM1zfk5A6s49> or for more information email Joe Hopkins: alpha.assumption@gmail.com. We hope to run another Sycamore course in Eastertide looking at “*Living Our Faith in the World.*”

NOTTINGHAM 40 DAYS FOR LIFE 2021: **40 Days for Life** is a peaceful and prayerful way to work for an end to abortion. In the Nottingham Diocese, with the support of Bishop Patrick, we have prayed outside the abortion facility at the QMC during Lent for several years. Routine abortions no longer take place there so last year we prayed at the Stapleford Care Centre, which contains a BPAS abortion clinic, until the Covid lockdown meant that we could no longer pray outside the clinic. We completed the prayer campaign by praying at home. During Lent from **17th February to 28th March 2021**, people in our Diocese are invited to pray and fast for an end to abortion. We planned to return to Stapleford but are currently prevented from doing so by lockdown (although the abortion clinic continues to see women). So, we plan to start our 2021 campaign online. You are invited to peacefully pray for an hour or more during a 40 – day vigil running for 12 hours daily during Lent. Please **sign up now** to pray with us at 40daysforlife.com/nottingham or you can contact us at 40daysforlifenotts@gmail.com. Bishop Patrick will celebrate Mass for us on **Thursday 11th February 2021** at the Cathedral at 7:00pm – if you live near Nottingham (and are not in a high–risk category) please do come. You can also follow the Mass online through the cathedral website.

SENIOR SAFEGUARDING COORDINATOR: The Catholic Diocese of Nottingham seeks to appoint an experienced Safeguarding Professional to lead and manage its Safeguarding Service. Working with the Bishop, the Diocesan Trustees, Safeguarding Commission and Clergy and Parishes of the Diocese, this person will lead and develop safeguarding strategy and practice to the highest levels, and implement national policies and procedures fully and consistently. This is a key senior role, central to the commitment of the Bishop and the Diocese to minimise safeguarding risks, achieve excellent outcomes with and for children and vulnerable adults and enable a protected, supportive environment in which the Mission of the Church demonstrably takes place safely across the Diocese. The successful applicant will be a highly motivated, energetic and enthusiastic individual with proven team leadership skills and an expertise in and, commitment to, safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. **Salary:** £ 43, 800 – £ 47, 800 dependent upon qualifications and experience. **For more information and an application pack email:** office@dioceseofnottingham.uk. **Closing date 28th February 2021.** Interviews are expected to take place in person on **Monday 8th March 2021**.

VOCATIONS: Are you looking for a challenge? Are you searching for God? Why not join the Vocations Team at their Zoom Café on Monday 1st March 2021 from 7:30 to 9:00 pm, where you will have an opportunity to ask questions and chat with Religious Sisters and Priests about Vocations. A warm welcome awaits you. Please email Diane at vocationsadmin@dioceseofnottingham.uk to register your place or for any further information. They look forward to seeing you (for anyone 18 and over).

NATIONAL LOCKDOWN GUIDANCE: *As we continue with the current lockdown measures implemented by the Government, the continued emphasis remains to stay at home and only go out if it is absolutely necessary. The feeling and belief that I and, a number of priests and people continue to have, is that the responsible course of action is to close our Churches for this period. I would suggest that in this and, indeed, in all situations, we use our discretion as to what is safe and advisable in our particular circumstances. As the Government has often said, just because you can do something doesn't mean you should.*

I believe it is a good idea, at this stage, to continue with our amended arrangements, given the continued increased danger of transmission of the new strains of the virus and the vulnerability of our congregations and those who assist as stewards and cleaners. As the Bishop said at the beginning of the first National Lockdown priests are not to feel pressured to do anything that they feel will put them or anyone else at risk. We are also reminded that the Sunday obligation remains suspended and that live – stream Masses are widely available.

After careful consideration of the current situation in our city and county and, the fact that there is still no definitive advice from the Government at the moment, the feeling remains that it is still too soon to re – open our Churches for public worship. Although the infection rate has come down, it is still at a much higher rate than it was last year and the vaccination programme needs time to work through the general population. We will therefore, review the closure again on the 1st March 2021.

I know that this is not what some people want hear and it is not a decision that has been taken lightly. Personally, saying Mass on my own is not something I am always happy to do. But the facts confirm the really terrible news, that there have been over 116, 000 deaths in the UK and over 4 million cases of infection. The news reports continue to remind us of the real struggle and pressures which our health care workers face, both physically and mentally, on a daily basis and have done for a considerable period of time now and, it seems that they will continue to do so for some time to come. This continued temporary closure then, is to support the message from the NHS and Government to 'Stay at Home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives' and, to recognise that despite all the measures we take in our Churches, to come to Mass is still a risk, especially travelling to and from Church, particularly for the more vulnerable and elderly members of our communities.

All Masses listed in the Parish Newsletter will be said privately. Funerals can continue in Church under strict restrictions. We look forward to welcoming you back as soon as it safe to do so.

The Sixth Sunday of the Year: B.

(READINGS: Leviticus 13^{1-2, 44-46}; Psalm 31^{1-2, 5, 11}; 1 Corinthians 10³¹⁻¹¹ and; Mark 1⁴⁰⁻⁴⁵)

In our Gospel for today, a leper comes to Jesus and asks to be healed. He is suffering not only from a physical sickness, but also from ritual uncleanliness, making him incapable of worship. Leprosy was the most dreaded of all diseases in ancient times. It was inherently fatal, terribly disfiguring and totally debilitating. It robbed people of life, limbs and liberty. It ruined people's lives irreparably and consigned them to a living death in all the important areas of life. Physically, there was no known cure for leprosy. So, all the leper had to look forward to was pain, disfigurement and death. Spiritually, with sickness viewed as a punishment for sin, lepers were also made to feel like sinners. Psychologically, they could expect no sympathy nor compassion. Since illness was considered a direct result of sin, people judged them somehow responsible for their own afflictions. Worse still, each leper had to face the incredible guilt and the lingering doubt of having caused their own suffering. Socially, with leprosy considered contagious and no cure available, people shunned lepers and forced them to live as outcasts on the margins of society.

So, leprosy was one of the most feared and most frequently encountered diseases in ancient times. The bacterial skin infection started small, almost invisibly, but it soon spread. It rotted the victim's extremities; fingers, nose, lips and, gave off a thoroughly disgusting smell. As explained in today's First Reading, lepers were excluded from society and left to die a slow, painful and humiliating death. They were prohibited by law from coming within a hundred yards of healthy people; this is why they had to shout, "Unclean, unclean!" To come into contact with a leper was to make oneself unclean, since their disease, so it was believed, was a sign of God's punishment.

Theologians and spiritual writers have always seen in this Old Testament idea of leprosy a symbol of sin. Sin is a kind of spiritual leprosy. It disfigures our souls and spreads into every corner of our lives. It destroys us and destroys our ability to relate to other people. It cuts us off from the purpose of our life and our role in human society and human history. Just as leprosy starts small but spreads and grows, so one sin, one betrayal of our conscience or one compromise with Church teaching can easily become a spark that starts a spiritual forest fire. And so, when Jesus reaches out and touches this leper and heals him, it is much

more than just another miracle. It is a revelation of Our Lord's entire mission. He is the Redeemer, the Saviour; He is the one who comes into this fallen, sin – infected world and, with the power of His grace and mercy, cleanses it and gives it a fresh start. And He does the same thing with each one of our lives, as often as we need it. Jesus came and He still comes, not to condemn, but to save.

One of the things we must remember, whenever we come across Our Lord healing a leper in the Gospel, is that He still wants to heal us of our leprosy. And yet we may well say, “We don't have leprosy!” And thanks be to God and the advances in medical sciences, leprosy is almost eradicated from the face of the earth. But we do have another kind of leprosy. We have moral leprosy, we have spiritual leprosy, we have leprosy of the soul, interior leprosy that we call sin. Sin is spiritual leprosy. And just as Jesus the Divine Physician healed the physical leprosy of His time, so does He desire to heal the moral leprosy of sin today. All He wants to hear from us is what He heard from the leper in today's Gospel. We recall how the leper, filled with faith, knelt before the Divine Physician and said, “If you want to, you can cure me.” And Jesus said, “Of course I want to, be cured.” That is what Our Lord wants to hear from us, about our interior leprosy of sin.

St Mark points out a subtle detail in this encounter that we should not overlook. Jesus cured the leper by touching him. Think about that for a moment. Jesus was all – powerful. There are times in the Gospels where He performs a miracle simply with a word or even just with an unspoken desire. He didn't have to touch this leper; and in fact, it was against Jewish law to touch him. A word or a wave of His hand would have done the trick, fulfilled the law and been a lot more pleasant than touching the flesh of this repugnant outcast. And yet, Jesus does touch him. He makes a point of touching him. Jesus goes beyond what is strictly necessary, because He wants to show us that His love is super – abundant. He doesn't measure out His mercy in test – tubes, like a chemist; He pours it out like a waterfall. Jesus touched that leper for our sake, just as He suffered the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the Way of the Cross and His long, excruciating Crucifixion for our sake. He knows that it is hard for us to trust Him, to come to Him with our wounds, our sins, our weaknesses and our failures. He knows it is hard for us and so He makes it easier, by showing us that He is so much bigger than all of that.

In light of the Law of Moses and the common custom of the day, the fact that the leper in today's Gospel dared to approach Jesus at all was a sign of the man's great desperation and his even greater faith. Since the only way out of the leper colony was a cure, for the man to approach Jesus he had to believe that Jesus could cure him. At the time of Our Lord leprosy was such a dreaded disease and what made it worse was that people wanted to deny having it. They wanted to hide away from it; they didn't want to admit that they had leprosy. Because they knew of the severe repercussions of having it. That is why there were such detailed prescriptions against it, as we hear in the Book of Leviticus. Once you knew you had leprosy you were outcast – so people would deny having it.

I think that the same is true today of that interior leprosy that we call sin. We would like to deny that we've got it. We would like to avoid it. We would like to rationalise our way out of it or very often blame someone else. This is what we call today, the loss of the sense of sin. Even psychologists say it, even sociologists and observers of our culture say it, that the difference between what is right and what is wrong has become so obscured that we have lost the sense of sin. “It's okay so long as we don't hurt anyone.” We no longer think that we have that moral leprosy, which we call sin.

And all that Our Lord wants to hear us say is, “If you want to you can cure me,” and He can make us clean and He will.” He heals us of our internal leprosy of sin, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, for instance. He heals us, when we, recognise that we have done something wrong and turned back and asked for His forgiveness. He heals us at Mass, every time, at the beginning of the Eucharist when we say, “Let us acknowledge our sins,” and we ask the Lord for forgiveness. He heals us before Holy Communion, when we say, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

The ancient practice of ostracizing and isolating lepers seems barbaric today. But don't we do similar things in our own society. For example, cancer patients frequently feel neglected because people are uncomfortable with the disease and shy away. Our elderly in care homes complain that their families or friends rarely come to visit them. Families of alcoholics and drug addicts speak of being cut off and isolated because no one wants to get involved with the problems of addiction. And in all of this, we ostracize and isolate ourselves from God, through our sin; our sin which very often we deny.

We need not go into denial. We need not run away from our internal leprosy. We do not need to rationalise or talk our way out of it. Like the leper we admit it and we ask the Lord to cleanse us from that spiritual leprosy of sin; because those miracles continue. Jesus continues to work those miracles, in His Church, today, when we approach Him, in trust and confidence, aware of our need of His help.