The Roman Catholic Parishes of Old Hall Green, Puckeridge & Buntingford

(Established 1793: 2 Farm Ln, SG11 1DT) (Established 1914: 3 Station Rd, SG9 9HT)

website: https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/oldhallgreen **website:** https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/buntingford

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The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time 11 February 2024

Mass Times for the Week commencing 10-18 February 2024

All Masses will take place in the parish church of St Richard of Chichester, Buntingford.

Saturday 10 February 2024
Vigil Mass of the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
6.00pm: Francisco Maria White Nunes de Sousa Intention

Sunday 11 February 2024
The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
9.15am: The People of the Parish
11.00am: The People of the Parish

Saturday 17 February 2024
Vigil Mass of the First Sunday of Lent
6.00pm: The People of the Parish

Sunday 18 February 2024
The First Sunday of Lent
9.15am: The People of the Parish
11.00am: Francesca Brown RIP Birthday Intention



Wednesday 14 February
9.30am & 7.30pm Mass—St Joseph's
6.30pm Mass—St Richard's
with the distribution of ashes

CARDINALS LENTEN APPEAL

All funds raised go towards projects across our Diocese to support the work of services, such as Marriage & Family Life, Youth Ministry, Education and Caritas Westminster, who work for and with some of the most vulnerable people . His Eminence, Cardinal Nichols, has expressed his gratitude to everyone who supports the Appeal, with whatever they can afford.



The leper in the Gospel of today doesn't have a specific name because he can be each one of us. We are "the leper" of today's story. He asks on our behalf: "God, what do you want from me? Why this suffering?" Many times, throughout the centuries, pain, death, and misery were associated with the punishment of God for the sins of the world, or it is "just the will of God and we need to accept it…". We have always made God's will coincide with sadness, negative, and unpleasant events in our existence.

The one of Jesus of Nazareth is a story within the fabric of many other stories, so profound that one cannot come to know Jesus without listening to his encounters and putting oneself in the setting of a Near Eastern village 2000 years ago. Who was a leper in Jesus' time? For everyone the leper was a "walking dead", the marginalized par excellence. Leprosy is a skin disease and yet, each of us needs to be caressed, hugged, and touched. Even our spiritual flesh can die if it is not touched, hugged, and stricken by the gentle breeze of the Holy Spirit. The leper had to live outside the villages, away from everyone, and when someone approached him, he had to shout: "Unclean, unclean!" and ring a bell to signal his presence.

Everything happens because Jesus feels "compassion", which in Greek is more a "visceral love", which comes from the very intimate heart, which makes "the heart hurt". And then, Jesus breaks the customs and touches him knowing that he will become impure according to the Law. But Jesus overcomes the Law with his mercy and compassion because a caress is worth more than the Law itself. God is not disgusted by our miseries even when they are repulsive and dirty. His mercy knows no limits when invoked with humility and faith.

There were, probably, many other lepers hidden in the surrounding area; but they were ashamed to show themselves. The one in today's story was the only one to have overcome the shame and fear of breaking a law. And then it almost seems like he doesn't want to disturb him. He thinks that only those who deserve it, can ask God for something. It is not our merits that give us free access to Him, but our desire to meet Him. And even more: our poverty, our limitations, and our sins are not obstacles, but the gateway to His grace and His love. In short, only those who are convinced they are lepers can be touched by God.

We all have our "leprosy" that moves us away from God, probably well hidden under a respectable dress and we do not, like the leper, dare to shout it out. We are content with our decency before the Law: e.g., "I don't steal, I don't kill, I go to Mass regularly, etc.". But no law alone is sufficient to purify the heart.

Mark reminds us that God only wants healed children. God is healing, he did not create death, nor leprosy, nor war. We do not know how God is healing, but we know that he fights with us, gets involved with us, reminding us that he does everything by making everything happen!

The good news this Sunday? The face of God announced by the Nazarene is that of a Father who allows himself to be disturbed, involved, and passionate, who makes himself impure and wounded to heal our sick nature. Wonderful! *Fr Marco Lazzaron*

A Prayer Offering to the Holy Child.

0 Dear, sweet Infant Jesus. I offer You: my will, that You strengthen it; my mind, that You inspire it; my memory, that You fill it; my wishes and desires, that You cleanse them. I sacrifice to You: my intentions, that You guide them; my trouble and my labour, that You bless them; all my inner and outer activities, that You make them sacred. All I am and all I have ls Yours. Your love for me is my hope and my trust. Hear me and grant that I may never leave You. Amen