

Fr Brian writes ... REJOICE! 4th Sunday of Lent

Background on the Gospel Reading, Luke 15:1-3, 11-32: Jesus teaches about forgiveness. The Fourth Sunday of Lent is traditionally called Laetare Sunday. Laetare is a Latin word that means "rejoice." We lift our Lenten mood a little by having a few more candles, hearing more of the organ, the priest intoning parts of the Mass and wearing a rose coloured chasuble. Today's Gospel describes the reason for our joy: God's great love for us has been revealed in Jesus. Through his Passion, Death, and Resurrection, Christ has reconciled us with God and one another. As Jesus teaches, the Pharisees and scribes complain and challenge Jesus because he is welcoming sinners at his table. Today's parable of the prodigal son invites us to consider the depth of God's mercy and love. Jesus reaches out to sinners while they are still sinners, inviting them to conversion through fellowship with him. Jesus is God acting among us; by befriending us, he is inviting us to return to friendship with God. Our familiarity with today's parable risks dulling us to its tremendously powerful message. We call this the parable of the lost son or the prodigal son. This parable provides a great teaching when we apply it to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Church asks us to celebrate this sacrament at least once a year. Lent is a good time to go to confession. Proper preparation for the reception of Holy Communion suggests that we should make frequent use of confession, so that, as St Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 11:29,) we avoid eating and drinking judgment upon ourselves. When did you last go to confession?

VISIT TO ALLEN HALL NEXT SUNDAY 7TH APRIL: For those people who have reserved seats: The coach will leave St Joseph's Bedwell at 12.15pm prompt so please arrive by 12noon and leave London at 5.30 pm for arrival back in Stevenage around 7:00pm. The cost of the coach is £10 for adults and £5 for children. **Please pay on the day.**

DAY OF PRAYER FOR SURVIVORS OF ABUSE, FRIDAY 12 APRIL 2019: The Cardinal has written to priests asking that Friday 12th April be kept as a Day of Prayer for Survivors of Abuse. He writes that the pain of those who have suffered abuse, and its lasting corrosive impact, are brought more fully into the light through the focus this day affords. The pain of the betrayal of trust is all the more profound when abuse took place within the community of the Catholic Church. We also see so clearly the failures in leadership in the Church that have made worse the sufferings of those who have been abused. I think the best way to mark this day is during our Friday Lenten devotion of the Stations of the Cross at 6pm, as an act of remembrance and reparation. Do please join me as usual. The Cardinal will keep the day with extra simplicity and self-denial and will celebrate the 5.30pm Mass in the Cathedral for Survivors of Abuse.

KNIFE CRIME. NOT JUST A LONDON ISSUE: On Saturday 6 April 2019, the Cardinal will be taking part in a Rally in Trafalgar Square under the heading 'Standing Together'. The Rally runs from 2.00-4.00pm. Nearest tube station is Charing Cross. The Rally will focus on the tragic consequences of knife crime. The Cardinal invites you to join him. It's easy to think this is just a London issue, but knife crime has also increased in Hertfordshire.

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE FROM ALL PARISHES WHO SUPPORTED THE MASS TO PRAY FOR VOCATIONS LAST SUNDAY: We got to meet and listen to ten of our seminarians and also Religious sisters and brothers. All the young men and women enjoyed being in Stevenage and witnessing the faith and vibrancy of Catholic life here. The seminarians wanted to thank you all for your hospitality and your continued prayers for them as they progress through their formation to become our Priests. If after this Mass, you feel God perhaps calling you to be a Priest, contact Canon Stuart Wilson vocationspromoter@rcdow.org.uk or speak to our seminarian, Mike, or Fr Michael or Fr Brian.

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION: If you were not able to attend the Recollection Day last Saturday for any reason, and wish to continue serving in this important role, **please email stevenagebedwell@rcdow.org.uk with your telephone number** and Lynne will continue to add you to the rota. **Please confirm in your email you are happy for your email to be shared with other Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.** As of today, each of our four Masses will need four Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Any queries about this, please have a chat to Mike. **APRIL ROTAS NOW AVAILABLE.**

EASTER LILLIES AND EASTER FLOWERS: You are invited to buy a lily in memory of a departed loved one, by placing a suggested donation of £5.00 and the name of the person in an envelope, and placing it in the collection baskets with your offertory gift. This weekend we will start collecting for the Easter flowers to decorate our Church.

CARDINAL'S LENTEN APPEAL: Our Lenten Alms this year will go to the Cardinal's Lenten Appeal, which this year has a special focus on food poverty. Please pick up a Cardinal's Lenten Appeal from the table in the porch.

LADIES LUNCH: Wednesday 3rd April at Coopes 12noon for 12:15pm. All welcome.

SPRING FAYRE 12TH MAY: Donations welcome for the Tombola Stall. Please place items in the box in the Church Porch. Thank you.

ST JOSEPH'S DRAMA GROUP PROUDLY PRESENTS "THE WIZARD OF OZ": In St Joseph's Church on Thursday 2nd May @ 7.30pm; Friday 3rd May @ 7.30pm; Saturday 4th May @ 2.00pm and 7.30pm. Tickets are £5.00 adult; £3.00 child (Years 7-13 inclusive) and all primary school children free. Please contact David on 07775 911548 or Margaret on 07875 245094 to reserve tickets."

HCPT LOURDES APPEAL: Thank you for your generosity our Parish raised £645.65 for the recent HTCP Lourdes collection which helps send children and their helpers to Lourdes.

NEW OFFERTORY ENVELOPES: Are now ready for collection from the table in the Church porch.