Fr Brian writes … 5TH SUNDAY OF LENT. BACKGROUND ON THE GOSPEL READING:
Today's Gospel begins by reporting that Jesus is teaching the crowds in the vicinity of the Temple. The scribes and the Pharisees approach Jesus, bringing a woman who has been caught in the act of adultery. They put to Jesus the question of what ought to be done in this case. The Pharisees state clearly that according to the Law of Moses, those caught in the act of adultery were to be stoned to death. Jesus suggests that the one without sin cast the first stone. We can easily imagine the scene as the Pharisees and the elders disperse, one by one. Jesus has eluded the trap they had prepared. Left alone with the woman, Jesus asks where the accusers have gone. With no one remaining to condemn the woman, Jesus sends the woman on her way, refusing to pass judgment on her and exhorting her to avoid future sin. Jesus' response to those who accuse the woman is more than a caution to us about making judgment of others. It is a profound lesson in divine mercy and forgiveness. As sinners, we are all unworthy to judge the sins of others and we would stand convicted by God for our transgressions. Yet Jesus, the one without sin and thus our judge, offers us who are sinners his mercy and forgiveness. Redeemed by Jesus' compassion, we are sent to sin no more and to live in God's love and peace. What are we doing this Lent to avoid sin?

REMOVAL OF CAR PARK HEDGES AND SHRUBS: These have been removed in the interests of pest control, vehicle safety, and to open up the front of the church so that it is fully visible from all aspects. In time these areas will be put to other uses. Any ideas?

ALTAR SERVERS REHEARSAL FOR EASTER ETC SATURDAY 13TH APRIL AT 3PM: This will take place on Saturday 13th April at 3pm in the Church. Please sign up on the sheets in the sacristy for whatever service or Mass you can assist with. On a related note, Altar Servers must ensure that all Albs are neatly stored in the sacristy cupboard and not allowed to fall off the hangers. It is not fair that others have to sort your mess out by picking up after you! Also please ensure that you arrive in the sacristy 15 minutes before Mass starts. It helps to have everyone in place for Mass planning. Thank you for your service. **ALTAR SERVER VESTMENTS: Could I please ask Altar Server parents to take home one vestment to wash and iron as it would be lovely if all the Vestments were clean for Easter. Thank you.**
Children making their First Holy Communion this summer may like to consider taking up serving starting in September. Do let me know if your child is interested.

PALM SUNDAY MASS IN CAR PARK: To facilitate our Palm Sunday procession into church at the 1030am next Sunday, capacity in the car park will be reduced by about half, so that we can have space to gather in front of the church. You may wish to park elsewhere on this occasion, share car journeys, or park in the school grounds.

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. 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.

SAFEGUARDING: Parishioners will be aware from the secular and Catholic media and press that Pope Francis has been holding a summit on child protection and clerical abuse and has called on Catholics around the world to work together to erase "this abominable crime from the face of the earth". The Catholic Church in England and Wales has established systems and training for both priests and lay people to try and ensure that children and vulnerable adults are now safe within our communities and that the sort of abuses which have happened in the past cannot happen again. Every parish has at least one Parish Safeguarding Representative. Ours is John McDonnell whose contact details are on a Safeguarding poster on the notice board. The National Catholic Safeguarding Commission (NCSC) also provides advice for anyone who has suffered abuse, and information leaflets are available or by contacting the PSR. If you wish to know more please contact the Parish Safeguarding Representative at stevenagebedwellsg@safeguardrcdow.org.uk

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.

BAPTISM COURSE: The next Baptism Course takes place on Saturday 1st June 10am-12noon in St Joseph's Church Hall. If you wish to attend the Course please complete an A5 Registration Form from the table.

IRISH NETWORK, STEVENAGE: Afternoon Tea and Dance on Wednesday 10th April. Please see the poster on the notice board.

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."