

The Little Flower Messenger

Year C – THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT – 20th March 2022

Welcome to our Parish Community of St. Theresa of Lisieux

The Presbytery, High Lane, Stansted Mountfitchet, CM24 8LQ

Tel. 01279 814349 • stansted@dioceseofbrentwood.org • www.sttheresastansted.org

• Twitter: @StStansted • Instagram: sttheresastansted

Priest-in-Charge: Fr. Lee Bennett freebennett@dioceseofbrentwood.org ☎ 01279 814 349

Parish Deacon: Rev. Des Connors desconnors@dioceseofbrentwood.org ☎ 07748 464 101

Parish Administrator: Clair Rava stansted@dioceseofbrentwood.org ☎ 01279 816 889/07734 273 969

Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

'Unless you repent you will all perish as they did.'

Mass book (P. 160)

1st Reading:

Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15

Psalm 102:1-4:

The Lord is compassion and love.

2nd Reading:

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Gospel Acclamation:

Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God! Repent, says the Lord, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God!!

Communion Antiphon: (P. 163)

The sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for her young: by your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they who dwell in your house, for ever singing your praise.

This Week's Good News

Dear Friends,

All three of today's readings speak of God's mercy and compassion in disciplining His children by occasional punishment, while giving them many "second chances" despite their repeated sins. Although God's love for us is constant and consistent, He will not save us without our co-operation. That is why He invites us during Lent to repent of our sins and to renew our lives by producing fruits. The first reading tells us how God shows His mercy to His chosen people by giving them Moses as their leader and liberator. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (v 6) reveals Himself to Moses from the burning bush and assures Moses of His Divine presence with His people and of His awareness of their sufferings in Egypt. He declares His intention of using Moses as the leader who will rescue His enslaved people. Then He renews the promise He made to the patriarchs (v 8), to give them a "land flowing with milk and honey." In the Responsorial Psalm (Ps 103) the Psalmist reminds us of God's mercy: "*He pardons all your iniquities; He heals all your ills. He redeems your life from destruction; He crowns you with kindness and compassion.... Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in kindness.*" The second reading warns us that our merciful God is also a disciplining God. Paul reminds the Christians of Corinth that they must learn from the sad experience of the Israelites who were punished for their sins by a merciful and just God. The merciful and gracious God is also just and demanding, and, hence, they must be free from sexual sins and idolatry. Today's Gospel reading emphasizes the Christian call to *metanoia*, which means conversion, repentance, and inner change, and heartens us with the reality of God's patient mercy. It explains how God disciplines His people, invites them to repent of their sins, to renew their lives, and to produce the fruits of



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the Holy Spirit. Citing two tragic events, Jesus exhorts the Jews to repent and reform their lives. With the parable of the barren fig tree, he also warns them that the merciful God will not put up with them indefinitely. Although God patiently waits for sinners to repent, giving them grace to do so, He will not wait forever. Time may run out; therefore, timely repentance is necessary.

Jesus uses two local tragedies to teach us about our need for repentance and a renewal of life. The slaughter of the Galileans by Pilate, recorded in today's Gospel reading, is unknown outside Luke's Gospel. But the Jewish historian Josephus reports how Pilate disrupted a religious gathering of Samaritans on Mt. Gerizim with the slaughter of the participants. On another occasion, Pilate killed many Galilean Jews who protested when he appropriated money from the Temple treasury to build an aqueduct in Jerusalem to obtain a better water supply for the pilgrims. But Luke presents these two real incidents as one tragedy, which occurred in the Temple premises. Even though it was Pilate who commanded the atrocity to be carried out, the natural assumption at the time was to think that the victims were particularly guilty and must have somehow "deserved" it. Some Bible scholars think that Jesus is simply predicting the foreseeable political and military consequences of not embracing Jesus' call to "Kingdom ethics"—love, forgiveness, and non-retaliation.

Jesus proceeds to connect his warning to another episode, namely, what appears to have been an accident related to the renovation work on the control tower of the water supply scheme at Siloam, in which eighteen people died. The Jews interpreted this tragedy as God's punishment of the workers who had co-operated with Pilate in his sacrilegious aqueduct project. Jesus denies that either the Galileans or the eighteen people suffered because of their sins, but he calls his listeners to repent lest they suffer for theirs. In fact, Jesus presents both these incidents as timely reminders of the need for *all* to repent, saying, "... *unless you repent you will all likewise perish.*" Repentance is given major emphasis in Luke's Gospel (3:3; 3:8; 5:32; 13:3, 5; 15:7; 16:30; 17:3; 24:47). The call to repent of one's sins always includes the threat of Divine retribution if one does not repent and the promise of forgiveness if one does. By citing two tragic events, Jesus warns his listeners not to spend their time speculating about the guilt of others, but to concentrate on examining their own lives, and their own need for repentance and forgiveness.

We know that tragic events can occur randomly, as in the cases of the Galileans and the eighteen Jerusalemites and they have nothing to do with the guilt or innocence of the victims. For example, a tornado that destroys a nightclub also destroys a Church. An earthquake or tsunami kills the saints as well as the sinners in the affected area. Drunk drivers kill innocent people. Religious fanatics, terrorists, and suicide bombers cause the untimely deaths of good as well as of bad people. Violent people, with or without provocation, injure their loved ones. Only a few of us will have a *burning-bush* experience, but all of us have struggled to understand why tragedy seems to befall innocent people. In all these cases, we need to trust in Divine mercy, believing that God is with us, and God is on our side, even in those situations we cannot explain. Jesus' life is the clearest evidence that a person's suffering is not proof of that person's sin. While sin can lead to tragedy, not every tragedy is the result of sin.

Jesus then goes on to tell the parable of the barren fig tree. In this parable, the owner comes year after year to the fig tree, and year after year, it fails to bear any fruit. In frustration he tells the custodian to cut it down as it has never borne any fruit. The custodian asks for the owner to give it one more year, a second chance to bear fruit.

God always gives us a second chance. The prodigal son, returning to the father, was welcomed as a son, not treated as a slave. The repentant Peter was made the head of the Church. The persecutor Saul was made



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Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. During Lent, we, too, are given another chance to repent and return to our Heavenly Father's love. We are also expected to give others another chance when they ask our forgiveness. God would like to use each one of us as the "gardener" in the parable to help Him cultivate our families and communities and enrich them with grace. Let us thank God for using others to help us bear fruit. *Grace is everywhere*. Let us always cooperate with grace, especially during Lent.

Deacon Des

Parish News

Ukraine Appeal Weekend 19th -20th March 2022: You will have all seen the distressing pictures being televised of the people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine and the growing humanitarian crisis.

CAFOD is part of one of the largest aid networks in the world, Caritas Internationalis, who along with other humanitarian organisations, are already helping people affected by this conflict. Due to their global reach and local presence, they are there when an emergency hits. Ukrainian and neighbouring Caritas local aid workers and volunteers are part of the communities they work with and so understand people's immediate needs. They are on the frontline of the response. Schools, hospitals and water systems must be protected from any armed violence so that practical help can be delivered without delay to people across the Ukraine.

To support this work, the Parish will be holding a special collection this weekend (19th & 20th March), the funds will be sent onto CAFOD to support the Caritas Internationalis work. Further information can be found via the following link: <https://cafod.org.uk/Give/Donate-to-Emergencies/Ukraine-Humanitarian-Appeal>

Should you wish to 'Gift Aid' your donation please be sure to place it into an envelope, detailing your name and address and place it into the Ukraine Appeal basket. If you are unable to make a donation this weekend, or you prefer to donate electronically, please feel free to do so via the Parish Current Account. Could we ask that you identify your donation as specific to the Ukraine Appeal so that we can pass the monies onto the charity. We shall also be passing on a donation from the Parish's Bonus Ball competition.

Our hope is to raise around £2500- £3000. Please give generously and thank you for your support.

Transition to normal Church from COVID: As part of the continuing transition back to normal Church, the passing of the baskets for the Offertory collection will recommence from the weekend of the 9th and 10th of April, the start of the new financial year.

We urgently need your help! Volunteers are required to count the weekly collections, in the past a rota has been pulled together in such that you would be called once every 4 to 5 weeks to count the money after the last Mass on a Sunday, usually taking around an hour.

The collections are counted by two people, and you will be placed with an experienced volunteer who will provide you with full guidance on the process.

Please contact Clair Rava in the Parish Office should you wish to volunteer.

CAFOD Family Fast Day, Lent Appeal: Thank you for giving to CAFOD's Lent Appeal. Your generous gifts will ensure that CAFOD's local experts, like Sister Anthonia in Sierra Leone, can support families with training in growing and making healthy food so that children can grow up big and strong. You can still donate on the CAFOD website ([Cafod.org.uk/Lent](https://cafod.org.uk/Lent)) or join Cafod's *Walk Against Hunger* to raise vital funds to tackle extreme hunger and its causes.



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Mass Times and Intentions

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT – YEAR C		
Saturday 19th March <i>St Joseph</i>	Confessions: 5:15 p.m. – 5:45 p.m. Mass: 6:00 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	Michael Bambridge (J. Bambridge)
Sunday 20th March	Mass: 8:30 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i> Confessions: 9:15 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. Mass: 10:00 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	People of the Parish
Monday 21st March	Confessions: 9:00 a.m. Mass: 9:30 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	James Fox R.I.P. Beloved father of Angela (B. Horton)
Tuesday 22nd March	Confessions: 7:15 p.m. Mass: 8:00 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	Lucia (O. Salici)
Wednesday 23rd March	Stations of the Cross: 12:00 p.m. Mass: 12:30 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i> Confessions: 1:15 p.m.	John O’Driscoll R.I.P. Beloved husband of Mary (B. Horton)
Thursday 24th March	Confessions: 9:00 a.m. Mass: 9:30 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	
Friday 25th March <i>Annunciation of the Lord</i>	Confessions: 9:00 a.m. Mass: 9:30 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i> Stations of the Cross Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Benediction: 7:00 p.m.	
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT – YEAR C		
Saturday 26th March	Confessions: 5:15 p.m. – 5:45 p.m. Mass: 6:00 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	Bridget McCreanor R.I.P. (S. Woods)
Sunday 27th March	Mass: 8:30 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i> Confessions: 9:15 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. Mass: 10:00 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	People of the Parish Jeanne & David Bambridge 60th Wedding Anniversary (J. Bambridge)



PLEASE TAKE THIS NEWSLETTER HOME WITH YOU AND DISPOSE OF IT RESPONSIBLY. THANK YOU.



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