

The Little Flower Messenger

Year C – FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT – 27th March 2022

Welcome to our Parish Community of St. Theresa of Lisieux

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Gospel: Luke 15:1-3

'Your brother here was dead and has come to life'

Mass book (P. 168)

1st Reading:

Joshua 5:9 -12

Psalm 33:2-7:

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

2nd Reading:

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Gospel Acclamation:

Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.' Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus!

Communion Antiphon: (P. 171)

You must rejoice, my son, for your brother was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.

This Week's Good News

Dear Friends,

The fourth Sunday of Lent marks the midpoint in the Lenten preparation for Easter. Traditionally, it is called *Laetare Sunday* (Rejoice Sunday). It is a sign of what liturgical authors call “anticipatory joy”— a reminder that we are moving swiftly toward the end of our Lenten fast, and the joy of Easter is already on the horizon. This Sunday is set aside for us to recall God’s graciousness and to rejoice because of it. In many ways we have been dead, but through God’s grace we have come to life again; we have been lost but have now been found. We have every reason to rejoice. Hence, each of the three readings characterizes one of the many facets of Easter joy. In the first reading, the Chosen People of God are portrayed as celebrating, for the first time in their own land, the feast of their freedom. Their joy is one of promises fulfilled. In today’s Responsorial Psalm the joyful Psalmist invites us, “*Glorify the Lord with me; let us together extol His Name!*” then gives us our reason for rejoicing, “I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears!”

The second reading joyfully proclaims the effect of Jesus’ saving act as the reconciliation of all peoples to the Father. In the Gospel, the joy is that of a young son’s “coming home,” where he discovers and is healed by the reality of his father’s forgiving and gratuitous love. It is also the story of a loving and forgiving father who celebrates the return of his prodigal son by throwing a big party in his honour, a banquet celebrating the reconciliation of the son with his father, his family, his community, and his God. It is really the Parable of the Forgiving Father, the story of Divine love and mercy for us sinners, a love that is almost beyond belief. The common theme of joy resulting from reconciliation with God and other human beings is announced to all of us present in this Church – an assembly of sinful people, now ready to receive God’s forgiveness and His Personal Presence as a forgiving God in the Holy Eucharist.

In this parable Jesus outlines the three aspects or dimensions of repentance, by presenting three characters in this parable: 1) the repentant younger son, 2) the forgiving father and 3) the self-justifying elder son.



Please familiarise yourselves with the location of the fire exits, extinguishers, and assembly points at this church.

This is a double-edged parable. The lesson of Divine mercy to sinners is shown by the Father's reception of the returned younger son. A stern warning is given to the self-righteous people by presenting the dialogue between the father and his older son.

The first son began by wanting freedom from his father. Hence, he forced his father to give him his right to one-third of his father's property. The son then sold his property and travelled to a far-off city where he realized all his wild dreams of a carefree life. Finally, bankrupt, abandoned by his "friends," and faced with a local famine, he was forced to take up the job of feeding pigs – a job forbidden to the Jews. At last, awakened by his sufferings, he gathered enough courage to return to his father and confess his sin, thus becoming the model for repentant sinners. He had resolved to become a "hired servant" of his family, thereby regaining a measure of honour and independence, but with a social status matching his guilt and failure. Moreover, he would be able to take care of his father for as long as the father lived.

The father in the story represents God the Father. According to the law and customs in ancient Palestine, a father could dispose of his property by making a will that would be executed when he died, or he could give his possessions to his children while still alive. Usually, the eldest son received a double share or twice the amount that each of the other sons would receive. But in the parable, the father promptly gave a share of his property to his younger son, bid him a tearful farewell, and waited daily for his return. Finally, after squandering his money, his morals, and even his Jewish religious heritage, the boy returned in rags. He confessed his sins, and his father promptly forgave him, kissed him on the cheeks, and healed the broken relationship between them. He ordered a bath for his son, gave him new garments (a sign of honour) and a golden signet ring (sign of authority and trust). By ordering sandals for the feet of his son, the father signalled his reacceptance of the returned penitent as his son. The robe and ring and shoes were a sign that the son would not be received into the house as a *servant* (slaves did not wear shoes, robes, or finger rings) but in his former status as *son*.

The killing of the fatted calf, specially raised for the Passover feast, meant that the entire village was invited for the grand party given in the returned son's honour. When the elder brother refused to join in the party, the father went out to beg him to be reconciled with his younger brother and to share in the father's joy. The father assured the elder son of his continuing love and of the son's secure inheritance and place in the family by saying, "All I have is yours." Thus, the father symbolizes the loving and unconditionally forgiving Heavenly Father who is excessive, extravagant, and generous with His forgiveness and mercy. The reconciliation of the prodigal son with the prodigal father is celebrated in the form of a grand banquet.

Mirroring our Heavenly Father, Jesus, too, squanders his love on those who need it most. Although the story of the prodigal son is often given as an example of repentance, it is the story of how God forgives and heals the repentant sinner. Like God, the father in the parable was ready to forgive both of his "sinful" sons even before they repented. St. Thomas Aquinas explains that God already forgives us as soon as we repent, even before we go to confession or perform any penance. The forgiveness the father offers in the parable parallels the forgiveness God offers in real life. We should never judge another as unworthy of our forgiveness or of God's mercy, because all love is unconditional. When we frown at the actions and words of the Scribes and Pharisees as we read scripture, are we really frowning at ourselves?

The unforgiving elder son represents the self-righteous Pharisees. He had no feelings of sympathy for his brother. He played the part of a dutiful son, but his heart was not in it. He was resentful, bitter, and angry. He was so jealous of his younger brother that he never wanted to see him again. He levelled a series of allegations against his prodigal brother, whom he viewed as a rival. Instead of honouring his father by joining him in accepting his brother and playing an appropriate role at the meal, the elder son publicly insulted and humiliated his father (vv. 28-30). Jesus includes this character in the story to represent the scribes and Pharisees "who began to complain, saying, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'" We are not told how the elder son responded to his father's plea, or to his father's assurances of continued love, place, and inheritance ("All I have is yours"). Perhaps that is because Jesus meant the scribes and Pharisees to see that their own final response to the Father's love in sending Jesus had yet to be made, and that they still had time to "return home" to their Father in welcoming Him.



Lent is a good time to adjust our attitudes and actions, with a good examination of conscience.

Deacon Des

Parish News

Thank you: Your generosity, as always, is amazing. Over the past three weeks, this is what you have achieved:

- ♦ CAFOD Family Fast Day, Lent Appeal: £575.89 including Gift Aid.
- ♦ Ukraine Appeal Weekend: £2,044.50 including Gift Aid and £1,000 from the Parish Bonus Ball giving a grand total of £3,044.50.

Thank you again for your generosity and support.

Helping those in the Ukraine, and Ukrainian Refugees: Caritas Brentwood are regularly updating information on their website, covering donations, prayer, and welcoming those who are fleeing the Ukraine. You will find everything at: <https://www.caritasbrentwood.org/ukraine/>

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.

Private Prayer: The church will be open for private prayer on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. All are welcome.

Baptism Course: Forthcoming dates are 6th April, 11th May, 15th June and 24th July; all on a Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. To enrol on the course, please email the Parish Office stansted@dioceseofbrentwood.org

Sacrament of Marriage: People who wish to be married in the Catholic Church must approach Fr. Lee / Deacon Des, at least 6 months prior to the intended date of their wedding, and before setting a wedding date.

Bonus Ball: You will have seen from the Parish Ukraine appeal that the Bonus Ball competition is going to make a contribution to that appeal.

Some of you might be unaware of this competition which has been running since 1997 – it is a simple competition based around the weekly Saturday Lotto draw. Each week a number is drawn by Lotto as a “Bonus Ball” – if you have that number, you win a prize of £30. Cost of entry is £1 per week payable monthly/Half yearly/Annually by standing order or electronic transfer/cheque.

Currently there are 9 numbers available and if you would like one or more of these numbers, please contact the Parish Office.

Surplus funds are used for specific projects, either within the Parish or externally, as is happening with the Ukraine Appeal – over the past 25 years, more than £26,000 has been raised and donated this way.

Visions Group: The Visions Group would like to invite anyone who wishes to share and grow their faith to join us every Monday at 4:00 p.m. in the Parish Centre. All are welcome. Visit the parish website calendar or contact Isobel for details.



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Mass Times and Intentions

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 <i>Mothering Sunday</i>	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 28th March	Confessions: 9:00 a.m. Mass: 9:30 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	
Tuesday 29th March	Confessions: 7:15 p.m. Mass: 8:00 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	Mahjouba (O. Salici)
Wednesday 30th March	Stations of the Cross: 12:00 p.m. Mass: 12:30 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i> Confessions: 1:15 p.m.	
Thursday 31st March	Confessions: 9:00 a.m. Mass: 9:30 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	
Friday 1st April	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.	Marie Jarvis R.I.P. (K. Clarke)
FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT – YEAR C		
Saturday 2nd April	Confessions: 5:15 p.m. – 5:45 p.m. Mass: 6:00 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	Derek Smith R.I.P. (V. Bonito & Family)
Sunday 3rd April	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> Mass: 12:00 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	People of the Parish Jeanne & David Bambridge 60th Wedding Anniversary (J. Bambridge) Gabriel Barker (L.Barker)

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



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