

**CATHEDRAL OF ST MARY & ST HELEN
HOLY CROSS AND ALL SAINTS**

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THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT (B)

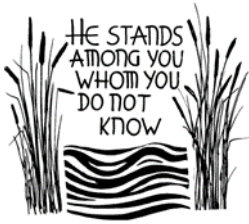
Sunday 17th December 2023

Spiritual Reflection:

John the Baptist was a light whose message continues to illuminate the darkness. He wasn't the light but pointed to the light - Jesus of Nazareth, the true light who was coming into the world. John's message of 'Make straight the way for the Lord' is as new and as fresh today as it was when it was first proclaimed. This is because the light of the gospel drives out darkness through the grace of repentance.

Words and ideas associated with repentance - such as sin, contrition, confession, absolution, sorrow, admission of guilt, taking responsibility - get a bad press today. There is a view, sometimes prevalent among clergy and theologians, that these ideas are ancient, oppressive, and old fashioned, and have no place in our modern, high-tech, sophisticated world. This way of thinking, is, however, simply wrong. The witness of John the Baptist and the testimony of the Church, the saints and the liturgy are that in order to go high, we need to first go low. In order to come into God's presence, we must first acknowledge how far we have strayed and fall short of God's glory.





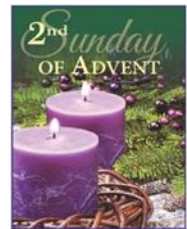
Now this doesn't have to be an onerous process - actually, being honest about our failing, our shortcomings and our weaknesses is liberating, freeing and honest. We walk in the light when we confess and acknowledge our sins and open ourselves up to God's healing. The greatest obstacle to walking in the light is the self-delusion, the illusion, the pretence that we have not sinned. John the Evangelist puts it like this: 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'

The Holy Spirit was sent precisely so we could see our sin, acknowledge it, confess it and be free of the way it diminishes and wounds us. Again, as John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, expressed it: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness' Advent is a wonderful opportunity, a moment of grace, a time to renew and discover anew not only the grace of repentance and the joy it gives but also the blessing or receiving God's gracious mercy and forgiveness.

MARANATHA, COME LORD JESUS!

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Dear Friends in Christ,

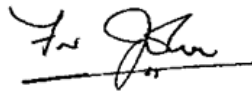
Today is Gaudete Sunday, and marks the mid-way point of our Holy Advent Season. The word 'Gaudete' means to 'Rejoice'; we change the colour of our vestments to rose today to anticipate the joy we will experience; and look forward in anticipation rejoicing that the Saviour Jesus Christ will be born for us once again this Christmas. This is such a beautiful time of the year, as we prepare for Christmas. We are given the great mission to be able to 'Prepare the Way for the Lord', just like John the Baptist did. We can do this in so many ways in our homes and in our lives. Don't let this Advent Season pass you by and do nothing!



It's now well over three months since I arrived here in Brentwood. Obviously, it always takes a long time to settle into a new parish, but I'm extremely happy, and I thank you all most sincerely for your wonderful welcome and kindness. It is truly a great joy getting to know you all, and please forgive me if I forget your name occasionally, you have one name to remember, I have about a thousand! It's incredible to see so much involvement in the life of the parish and Cathedral. I want to continue to build on this in the months and years ahead. To have pride in one's parish is truly an indication of commitment and belonging. We all have so much to be grateful for to Almighty God, and at this special time of the year, we ask the Lord Jesus to be with us and our families, and our parish family.

This week in your Parish Newsletter I have included a Christmas Card and greeting from Fr Gary and myself. I would like to thank those who have already dropped off Christmas card greetings, it's extremely thoughtful of you. I'm really looking forward to celebrating my first Christmas with you this year. Thank you all once again for everything you do for our parish and Cathedral.

May God Bless You All,



**OUR PARISH PENITENTIAL SERVICE** will be held on **Monday 18th December** at **7.30 p.m.** As part of our spiritual preparation for Christmas, it's so important to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This will be a wonderful opportunity to avail yourselves of the Sacrament of God's healing and forgiving love through Confession. There will be several visiting priests to hear confessions. Please make every effort possible to attend

the Penance Service. What more fitting way to welcome the Christ-child at Christmas.

**YOUR CHRISTMAS OFFERING** This year, as always, envelopes will be available to make Your Christmas Offering, which, as you know, is an opportunity in every Catholic Church for parishioners to make a Christmas gift to Fr John & Fr Gary, which forms a major part of their salary. If you Gift Aid your offering, please ensure that you use your Parish GA envelopes. There is also the Gifting Machine in the Narthex if you so wish, and the Gifting codes on the Cathedral notice board. This year your Christmas Offering can also be made electronically. You just need to transfer your offering to the parish account with the reference 'Xmas Offering' The details of the bank account are:



Sort Code: 40-13-22      Account Number: 30217492  
Account Name: Brentwood Cathedral

**VISITING SEMINARIANS FOR CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS** There will be a priest and several seminarians from the Pontifical North American College in Rome, who will be visiting us over the Christmas holidays. For the past 18 years I have hosted seminarians from PNAC. At Christmas the students are not allowed to return to the USA, so they travel throughout Europe. It's always been a great pleasure to have been able to host them. There will be a student priest with us for the Christmas Masses, and then on St Stephen's Day several more will arrive. I will cook & cater for the students, but could I make a special appeal to the parish community please for some desserts or Christmas goodies: chocolates, Christmas pudding, apple pies, trifle, mince pies, chocolate brownies, or any other desserts. Also, if anyone has any spare bottles: Whiskey, Gin, Brandy, or Port; Red or white wine, these are some of the favourites of seminarians. Thanking you all in anticipation.

**FORWARD PLANNING:** Just to inform you that I've organised a series of Lenten talks on the Synod that took place in Rome in October and



secured 4 of the participants who were present. Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP, who was the Preacher and Spiritual Director for the whole Synod; The Revd Dr Jan Nowotnik, Director of Mission for the Bishops' Conference, and its National Ecumenical Officer; Mr Austen Ivereigh Roman Catholic Journalist, Biographer of Pope Francis. Writer, speaker on contemporary Church affairs; Bishop Nicholas Hudson, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster, (former Rector of the Ven English College, Rome); appointed delegate at the Synod this year. This will be a wonderful opportunity to learn about the Synod on Synodality, and it will be open to the whole Diocese. More information in the New Year.

**PARISH OFFICE HOURS** are Monday to Thursday from 8.30 a.m. - 3.00 p.m. Please note, the **parish office will close for the Christmas period** on Thursday 21st December and will re-open again on Tuesday 2nd January 2024.

**WINTER WARMER SOUP LUNCHESES** every Friday during January, February and March in the parish hall from 12-2.00 p.m. You and your family, friends and neighbours are most welcome to come along for free hot soup and crusty bread. There is no cost and there will be plenty of chat and warmth to help see us all through the winter months. Please do join us!

**A MESSAGE FROM DEACON SIMON AND SARAH** We know that scripture reminds us all that God's Holy Spirit will sometimes lead us in new, unexpected directions (John 3:8). As a couple, we have particularly experienced this over the past months. A new opportunity has arisen for Sarah as she has been appointed as the Headteacher of Dulwich College Kindergarten School (DUCKS), Singapore. This new position will mean that we will both be moving to Singapore from July 2024. While there will be challenges, after much prayer and discernment we are convinced that this is where the Lord is leading us. We will, of course, be sad to be leaving Brentwood and the parish community here at the Cathedral. However, we plan to have regular visits home, particularly for the great Feasts, and we know that our deep-rooted connections with this wonderful

parish will continue. Please pray for us as we prepare for this exciting next step in our journey, and please be assured of our prayers for you all. Though distance may separate us, our love for Christ means that we are always close! God bless, Deacon Simon and Sarah.

**COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS** today will be hosted by the Catenians; there will be no coffee next week but will recommence on 31st December and will be hosted by Missio. Why not come along for a cuppa and a chat?

**JOURNEY OF FAITH PROGRAM:** Our next meeting, Session 11, will take place on **Thursday 4th January 2024 at 7.30 p.m.** in Clergy House. The Theme: RECONCILIATION, Sin! Why the need to go to Confession?

**CHORAL VESPERS** is celebrated in the Cathedral on Wednesdays and Fridays at 6.00 p.m. (during term time). Everyone most welcome.

**PLEASE PRAY** for the repose of the soul of Sheena Docherty and Anne Rowe who died recently.

*Sheena's Requiem Mass will be celebrated in the Cathedral on Tuesday 19th December at 1.00 p.m.*

*Details of Anne's funeral are not known.*

May the souls of the faithful rest in the bosom of all God's saints and one day dwell in the land of the living.

**THE HOLY HOUR** of prayer and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament takes place every Monday evening from 6.30 - 7.30 p.m. and will be preceded by the **ROSARY** for Ukraine and peace in our world at 6.10 p.m.

**CATHEDRAL CAR PARK** We are fortunate to have a reasonably sized car park for our parishioners to use during Mass times, however we know it can become very full, very quickly. During our busy Advent period and particularly as the weather may become more adverse over the coming months, we ask you to

be extra mindful of your parking and would request that if you are able to park elsewhere and walk, you might consider leaving the spaces within the carpark for those who need them the most.

If you are using the car park, please do not block any exits or thoroughfares including the drive between the entrance gates - this is to ensure emergency vehicles can gain access at any time. Please also be respectful to all other drivers.

Please be aware that we have now been advised that the Council carpark is **open on a Sunday however, is only free for 30 minutes**; there is a flat rate charge of £1.10 for the day (until 7.00 p.m.)

In the New Year we will be looking to remark the parking bays - if you are able to assist with this in any way, please contact the Parish Office. Thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation.

### **PLEASE REGISTER TODAY AS A CATHEDRAL PARISHIONER:**

It is very simple. Each adult parishioner should either go to “Parish Census” at [www.cathedralbrentwood.org](http://www.cathedralbrentwood.org) or use the QR code:



For those of you who cannot complete the registration form online, forms are available in the narthex of the Cathedral. Once you have filled in the form, please return it to Clergy House.

### **MASS TIMES** in the Cathedral:

**SATURDAY VIGIL MASS** at 6.30 p.m.

**SUNDAY:** 8.00 a.m. / 9.30 a.m. / 11.30 a.m. & 6.30 p.m.

**WEEKDAY MASSES** Monday to Friday at 9.15 a.m.

**SATURDAY:** 9.15 a.m.

**SICK AND HOUSEBOUND PARISHIONERS** If you know anyone who is unable to come to Mass but would still like to receive Holy Communion in their home, contact Clergy House so we can put them on our Sick Communion list.

**THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK** is available to anyone who is gravely ill or about to have an operation, so if you know someone who should receive this important sacrament then please speak to a member of the clergy or ring the parish office on 265235.

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION** is available in the Cathedral on Saturdays from 10.00 - 11.00 a.m. Confessions in Italian are also offered.

**PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR SICK** and housebound parishioners and friends, including: Merle Anderson, Alistair Bailey, Yvonne Ball, Hermine Bayley, Madeleine Bevan, Eda Bright, Phil Carr, Roisin Cassels, Keith Chester, David, Iris Davis, Jenny Dean, Patricia Decup, Charlotte Donnelly, Margaret F, Rebecca Florendo, Julian Goode, Deacon Nicholas Holmes, Wong Su Hwa, Jess, Brian Kelleher, Lisa Landy, Lawrence, Susan Maskall, Romek Matyszczyk, Tony Maule, John McCarthy, Mary McCarthy, Carmel Micallef, Harry Newman, Barney O'Driscoll, Joe O'Herlihy, Steven Poole, Geraldine Sheehan, Robin Shenton, David Spring, Mary Stretch, Tim, TCT and all our sick.

## GENERAL NEWS

**VOCATIONS** Interested in a Vocation to the Priesthood? Vocations Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Willesden on **Saturday 23rd December**. Contact Fr Mark Swires - [VocProm@brcdt.org](mailto:VocProm@brcdt.org) - for more information.

**FRIENDS OF THE HOLY LAND** have produced a Christmas song which they hope will inspire many people throughout the world to pray in solidarity for reconciliation and peace in the Holy Land. The song has reached the ears of Pope Francis who has



endorsed it and its theme of a light shining in the darkness, a voice of hope rising from amidst the rubble of war. Since the Pope's endorsement the Christmas Song has been promoted on the Vatican News, here is the link - <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-12/pope-praises-fundraising-christmas-song-for-peace-in-holy-land.html>

**A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE** from the staff and trustees of Brentwood Catholic Children's Society: We would like to wish everyone across Brentwood Diocese a very happy and blessed Christmas. As we prepare to celebrate our 40th year in 2024, we would like to thank everyone who has supported our work by making a donation at one of the parish crib scenes across the Diocese since the charity was formed. This steadfast support has allowed us to give hope to thousands of children, young people and families by offering them the specialist care they need. Thank you all.

**NEWHAM DEANERY DAY OF RECOLLECTION:** 'The New Year - Praying for Peace with Our Lady' led by Fr. Stewart Foster on **Saturday 30th December** at Our Lady of Compassion Church, Upton Park, E13 9BF. Mass at 9.15am, talk in the hall, Eucharistic Adoration with Benediction ending at 3.00 p.m. Please bring a packed lunch.

**BISHOP'S CERTIFICATE IN CATECHESIS AND YOUTH MINISTRY** is an online course is designed to be an entry level qualification to help in the ongoing formation of adults involved in sacramental preparation (First Holy Communion and/or Confirmation) or youth ministry in the Diocese of Brentwood. It includes both the development of practical skills and the deepening of theological knowledge. For more information or to register your interest please email [clairebailey@brcdt.org](mailto:clairebailey@brcdt.org) or see the website <https://bcys.net/bishops-cert/>

**CAFOD's ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CRISIS APPEAL** Donate to CAFOD's Israeli-Palestinian Crisis Appeal at [cafod.org.uk/ipc](http://cafod.org.uk/ipc) or call 0303 303 3030 to support those affected and get funds to local trusted experts in Gaza and southern Israel who have been

working alongside communities helping those most in need. Your donation will help support aid workers providing urgent humanitarian aid including food, water and emergency shelter to those in need. Thank you for your prayers.

**HELP YOUR MARRIAGE** Do you feel alone? Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue ... or have you just stopped talking to each other? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille is a programme to support couples who have difficulties in their marriage. It brings a positive focus, new hope and helps nourish and grow your marriage. Tens of thousands of couples headed for divorce have successfully saved their marriages by attending and using the tools provided. The programme helps spouses uncover or re-awaken the love, trust and commitment that originally brought them together. It helps them through difficult times whether they are disillusioned or in deep misery. There is no group therapy or group work. For confidential information about 'Retrouvaille' or to register for the next programme commencing with a Virtual weekend on 8 - 11 February 2024 or a face-to-face weekend in Welwyn Garden City on 14-16 June 2024, call or text 07887 296983 or 07973 380443 or email [retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com](mailto:retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com) - or visit [www.retrouvaille.org.uk](http://www.retrouvaille.org.uk)

**SAHARA DESERT RETREAT IN MOROCCO** - 26th February - 11th March 2024. Including a day visiting Marrakesh and 9 full days in the Desert. With Fr Arnaud and Deacon Vladimir from St Antony's in Forest Gate. Designed for young adults, open to all adults able to hike 4 - 6 hours a day for 9 full days in the desert. £952 (plus flight). [www.desert-retreat.com](http://www.desert-retreat.com) or phone Catherine at 07807 348223.

**ESCORTED PILGRIMAGE** To Knock & Co Mayo, **7th April 2024**. £899.00 pps. Price includes flight, 10kg hold luggage, 5 nights in 4\* Castlecourt Hotel, Westport with Dinner, Bed & Breakfast. Lunch on three days. All entertainment, excursions and transport included. Visit Knock, Galway City, Kylemore Abbey, Croagh Patrick & Ashford Castle. Single supplement on Enquiry.

Contact Patricia or Natali on 01268 762 278 or 07740 175557 or email [knockpilgrimages@gmail.com](mailto:knockpilgrimages@gmail.com)

**BCYS SUMMER LOURDES YOUTH PILGRIMAGE** - July 2024 (exact dates TBC in due course) Bookings are now open online for the Brentwood Catholic Youth Service pilgrimage to Lourdes in July. The week is spent serving the main Diocesan pilgrimage, assisting the elderly and infirm, alongside times of retreat, reconciliation, visiting the baths, taking part in the beautiful Processions, an afternoon in the mountains, party and social nights - all with other young Catholics from around our Diocese. The pilgrimage is open to all those in school year 10 - 13, with all those of school leaver age (18+) invited to join us as young leaders (subject to attending a training weekend). All details and applications can be found on the website [www.bcys.net/events/sl24](http://www.bcys.net/events/sl24)

**VACANCIES IN DIOCESAN SCHOOLS:**

<https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/education/vacancies/school-vacancies/>

**QR CODES and CONTACTLESS GIVING** A new online donation system has been set up so that parishioners and visitors are now able to donate by using a QR code directly to the Parish; donations can be made either with or without gift aid using the QR codes below or by scanning those displayed around the Cathedral:

*giftaid it*

Please treat as gift aid donation, all qualifying gifts of money made from the date of this declaration. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that, if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

| Donate £3.00                                                                      | Donate £5.00                                                                      | Donate £10.00                                                                     | Donate £20.00                                                                      |
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*Donate without Giftaid-it*

If you are unable to donate with Giftaid-It then please use the codes below.

| Donate £3.00                                                                        | Donate £5.00                                                                        | Donate £10.00                                                                       | Donate £20.00                                                                        |
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