

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

**Canon John J Harvey**

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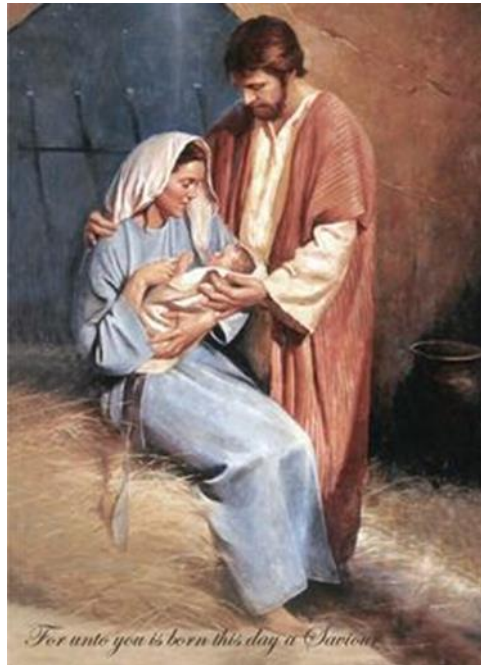
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**FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT (B)**

**Sunday 24th December 2023**

**Spiritual Reflection:**

‘O Rising Sun, you are the splendour of eternal light and the sun of justice. O come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.’ St Ignatius of Antioch wrote, Mary’s virginity and giving birth, and even the Lord’s death escaped the notice of the prince of this world; these three mysteries worthy of proclamation were accomplished in God’s silence. ‘Today, with the great feast of Christmas Day just around the corner, we urge you to find some peace and quiet to reflect in prayer and silence on one of these



mysteries, the mystery of Jesus’ birth.

The Virgin Birth is beyond human understanding. That a human being could be conceived without human seed and by the Holy Spirit defies nature and stands before us as one of the most amazing and incredible miraculous interventions of God in human affairs. Faith in the virginal conception of Jesus has always been met with opposition, mockery, and incomprehension from many quarters. The Church has from the beginning confessed and proclaimed that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

When he came to earth, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became a human being just like us. Turning once again to St. Ignatius of Antioch, we affirm with a hearty Amen that we too 'are firmly convinced about the Lord, who is truly of the race of David, according to the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin...he was truly nailed to a tree for us in his flesh under Pontius Pilate...he truly suffered, as he is also truly risen.'

As we ground ourselves in our faith, we will become increasingly more certain of the truth that Jesus was born of the Virgin. We will also grow in our understanding that while Jesus is Mary's only son, her spiritual motherhood extends to all humankind. God is our Father. Mary is the spiritual mother of all believers, and we strive with all our heart. Soul and strength during Advent & Christmas tide to imitate her.

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Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,

We have finally reached the Birthday of Our Lord once again into our lives this Christmas. The Nativity of Our Lord has been the focus of millions of people over the past two millennia. The fact that Almighty God deigned to send his only Son into our world in the innocence of the Christ-child, and how this event went almost unnoticed, gives us an insight into God's greatest plan of all - that a Saviour



was born for us! The Messiah enters the world and only a few shepherds and the Magi know of this birth. But his day will come, when as a man he will bring the Good News to the Poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and set the downtrodden free. They will hang him on a tree, and after three days he will triumph over sin and death in his Resurrection. Jesus Christ is born for each one of us this Christmas, like the shepherds and Magi let us fall on our knees and worship Him.



**A VERY BIG THANK YOU** To the whole parish community for everything you have done in helping to prepare for the Christmas celebrations this year. As this is my first Christmas with you, I have been so heartened, as I stated in my Christmas card last weekend, with all the wonderful voluntary help that we have here in the parish. It's wonderful to experience that great sense of community, commitment and belonging.

I would like to extend a special welcome to all our visitors over the Christmas holiday, and the many people who come to stay with families and friends. This Cathedral Parish is the Mother Church of the Diocese, and everyone is welcome here. The beautiful Choir and music will enhance the sacred liturgy over these Advent / Christmas Masses and services; Our Nine Lessons & Carols was spectacular, and we are so lucky to have such a wonderful music tradition, musicians, and choir director on a weekly basis.



A big thank you once again to all our Stewards and Greeters, Servers and Readers, Eucharistic Ministers & Choir for all the lovely Advent / Christmas celebrations. It's wonderful to be back to some semblance of normality once again, as Covid was absolutely devastating to parish life over a two-year period.

On a very personal note, on behalf of Fr Gary and myself, I would like to thank the many parishioners who sent personal Christmas greetings and gifts to Clergy House, it was extremely

thoughtful of you. Also, a big thank you for the many goodies dropped off for the Seminarians who will be staying over the Christmas holidays, they will certainly enjoy the treats, and gain a few extra pounds as well!

## HODIE CHRISTUS NATUS EST

Fr John & Fr Gary wish you and all your loved ones a Very Happy & Holy Christmas.

*Fr John and Fr Gary*

Felicem Natalem Christi, Feliz Navidad, Buon Natale, Joyeux Noel, Felis Natal, God jul, Wesolych Świąt, Crăciun fericit, Frohe Weihnachten, Vrolijk Kerstfeest, Linksmų Kalėdu, nollag Shona, Maligayang Pasko, Veseloho Rizdva.



**A VERY WARM WELCOME** I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Fr Richard Sofatzis, a student priest from the Pontifical North American College. Fr Richard was ordained for the Archdiocese of Sydney Australia in September. He will be with us over the Christmas holidays. The other seminarians will be arriving on St Stephen's Day (Boxing Day), and will be with us until 31st December. 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.

**THE CRIB** will remain in the Cathedral until 2nd February (The Presentation of the Lord). All donations go directly to Brentwood Catholic Children's Society; please be as generous as you are able.

**THANK YOU** to all those who helped Roisin with the refreshments following the Nine Lessons and Carols service.

**MORNING MASS ON MONDAY 1st JANUARY** will be at 11.00 a.m.

**PLEASE NOTE**, the parish office is now closed for the Christmas period and will re-open again on Tuesday 2nd January 2024.

**WINTER WARMER SOUP LUNCHES** 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!

**COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS** on 31st December and will be hosted by Missio and the following week is the turn of the PACE team. There is no coffee this week.

**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 Sr Imelda OSU who died recently.

*Details of Sr Imelda's funeral are not yet 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.

**LUNCHTIME RECITAL** Please join us to listen to Trajecti Voces, a Choir from Holland giving a seasonal recital at 12 noon on **Saturday 30th December** in the Cathedral.

**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?

**BCYS YOUTH MASS** in the Cathedral on **Thursday 4th January**. Beginning with pizza and refreshments in the Parish Hall from 6.00 p.m. and an Advent Reconciliation service in the Cathedral before Mass. Youth Mass will then be celebrated in the Cathedral at 7.30 p.m. Absolutely everyone is welcome, please bring instruments, and sing, serve or read if you wish! No need to book, but do let us know if you have a group coming - just email [info@bcys.net](mailto:info@bcys.net)

**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.

**250 CLUB** - Renewals are due now and new members are very welcome to join. This is an easy way to help raise funds for the Parish halls and every month a member of the club wins a prize! For those paying by ongoing standing order either monthly or annually, no action is required. If you pay in one annual instalment by cash, cheque or bank transfer, this will be due by 31st January 2024 please. If I have your email address, you should have already received a renewal form from me. Alternatively, forms are available from the Narthex, the Parish

Office (during office hours), by email or I can arrange to post one to you. New and renewal forms, along with payment, can be returned to Clergy House for my attention. Should you receive an email in error, please advise me so that I can remove you from the mailing list. Please also contact me if you are unsure how to make your payment or have any other queries. Thank you for your continued support. Pat Austin - email [pat@familyaustin.co.uk](mailto:pat@familyaustin.co.uk) or call 01277 824 363 / 07733 103 588.

**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:

**COMPLETE THE  
FORM ONLINE**



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

**LUNCHTIME RECITAL** Please join us to listen to Trajecti Voces, a Choir from Holland giving a seasonal recital at 12 noon on **Saturday 30th December** in the Cathedral.

**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.

**THE SVP ARE LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS** willing to help children put their faith into action. Could this be you? The St Vincent de Paul Society have primary school groups called Mini Vinnies, and volunteers would support teachers or youth leaders wishing to start a group in their school or parish. They will talk to children about how they can make a difference to those living in poverty and share resources to support the group. The role is flexible but does need people with some availability during school hours (at least 2 mornings or afternoons per month) who are willing to travel within the diocese (all costs are covered). If you are passionate about helping children discover how they can make a difference in their communities, please email Sarah for more information on [youngvincentians@svp.org.uk](mailto:youngvincentians@svp.org.uk). You do not have to have previous experience of working with children as all training will be given. Our next initial training day is on Tuesday 27th February 2024.

**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)

**VACANCY Assistant Headteacher Vacancy - St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Stanford-le-Hope.** For more information see [www.essexschoolsjobs.co.uk](http://www.essexschoolsjobs.co.uk) Deadline - **14th January 2024** at 12 Noon.

**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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