

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

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FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

Sunday 31st December 2023

The opening sentence of Leo Tolstoy's masterpiece Anna Karenina is a striking one: 'Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.' We can be sure that the Holy Family was a happy family, but like all happy families their happiness was forged through trial and suffering and the ups and downs of domestic daily living. Today we cross the threshold into the tranquillity and holiness of Holy Family. Here we find the hearth at which Jesus lived his



hidden years. Here we find the first domestic Church, a loving family devoted to God and to each other. The opening sentence of Leo Tolstoy's masterpiece Anna Karenina is a striking one: 'Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.' We can be sure that the Holy Family was a happy family, but like all happy families their happiness was forged through trial and suffering and the ups and downs of domestic daily living. Today we cross the threshold into the tranquillity and holiness of Holy Family. Here we find the hearth at which

Jesus lived his hidden years. Here we find the first domestic Church, a loving family devoted to God and to each other.

The Scriptures only speak of the birth of Jesus, the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt and the discovery of Jesus in the Temple. To learn more, we seek the wisdom and guidance of the Spirit. The Spirit leads us to understand that because the triune God is a communion of love, the family is its living reflection. St. Pope John Paul II said: 'Our God in his deepest mystery is not solitude, but a family, for he has within himself fatherhood, sonship, and the essence of the family, which is love. That love, in the divine family is the Holy Spirit.' The family is, then, a school of prayer, a school of service, a school of discipline, a school of formation, but most of all a school of love.

We thank God the Father for the Holy Family's witness of love, we rejoice in the Son for the healing grace of salvation, and we give praise to the Holy Spirit whose love is poured out upon us so we can love and serve God in our families. The importance of the family has been the bulwark of Christian teaching since the beginning. It is the womb from which vocations are born, be that to the married or priestly or religious life. Jesus spent his hidden years deeply rooted in the day-to-day life of his family in Nazareth - here he learnt to love, serve, and pray. Thank God for the family you were born into; each family member is a blessing and grace from God.

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Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,

As we approach the end of 2023 let us thank Almighty God for the many blessings and graces which has bestowed upon us over the past twelve months. We thank God for the gift of our faith, for families, friendship, employment, health, happiness, love, kindness, charity, and the many other graces that we receive. But at the same time let us also remember those who struggle with health issues, those who are unemployed, those who suffer addiction of one kind or another, those who have a lost a loved one over the past twelve months. May the healing hand of the Lord be always with them. At the end of a year, it's quite easy to be reflective; but let us thank God that for the most part 2023 was relatively free from Covid, and we have been allowed to carry on our daily lives normally.

Let us also remember the ongoing plight of those innocent people, who are exposed daily to the terrible and horrendous nature of war and conflict, especially those in the Holy Land & Ukraine. All anyone wants in this life is peace, and to live a normal life, without the daily threat of rockets and bombs, and constantly fearing for their lives. Let us ask the Prince of Peace to end these situations of hatred and war.

**THANK YOU TO THE WHOLE PARISH COMMUNITY**

On behalf of Fr Gary and myself, we want to thank you all for your great kindness and generosity over the Christmas holiday. For all the personal Christmas Cards and gifts dropped off at the presbytery, also for your generous Christmas Offerings, which forms the main part of the priest's salary throughout the year. Special thanks to all those parishioners who baked goods, pies, cakes, and biscuits, plus all the bottles that were donated for the Seminarians who are visiting us over this Christmas period. I must admit I was a little overwhelmed by your incredible kindness. Equally, the seminarians have had a wonderful stay with us here in Brentwood. Please keep them in your prayers as they continue in their formation to the Priesthood.



I would like to thank our Music Director Mr Andrew Wright and the whole music department for the most incredible music that was celebrated over all the Christmas Masses. Also, for the wonderful Nine Lessons and Carols celebrated on the 17th of December. The retiring collection at this service will go towards the Brentwood Cathedral Music Department for the promotion and encouragement of young musicians to perform at the Cathedral. We are so lucky and fortunate to have such a wonderful music tradition here at the Cathedral. I'm sure we're the envy of many cathedrals throughout the country.

There has been so much help given over the past few weeks in preparation for Christmas at the Cathedral; it's really what makes the Parish tick over daily. Thank you to everyone who helped: Choir, MC & Altar Servers, those who look after the altar linen, clean the brass, all our Ushers & Greeters at Mass, those who did the flowers so beautifully for Christmas.

**DID YOU KNOW** there is a traditional house blessing for Epiphany? It is sometimes known as 'chalking the doors' and is very simple. Take some chalk (ideally blessed by a priest on the Feast of the Epiphany) and write above the entrance of your

home: 20 + C + M + B + 24. The letters represent the initials of the Magi - Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar - who came to visit Jesus in the place where he was born. They also abbreviate the Latin phrase, Christus mansionem benedicat, which translates as "May Christ bless the house." The "+" signs represent the cross, and the "20" at the beginning and the "24" at the end mark the year. In this blessing we ask Christ to stay within our homes all year. Chalk will be blessed during the 930 Mass on Sunday 7th January and will be available to take away.

Fr John and Fr Gary are always pleased to be invited to bless your home for you. It is a beautiful way to mark the start of a new year, or the beginning of a new part of life in a new place.

**NEW YEAR'S DAY** 1st January 2024, is the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God. What more fitting way to begin the New Year than to join us for Holy Mass at 11.00am and ask the Lord's Blessing on you and your families in this New Year

May we take this opportunity of wishing you all a Very Happy, Holy, Healthy & Prosperous New Year for 2024

With Love, Peace & Many Blessings for 2024

**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.

**PLEASE NOTE**, the parish office 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!

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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 Matyszczuk, 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**



**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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