

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

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SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT (B)

Sunday 10th December 2023

Spiritual Reflection:

Many scholars believe St Mark's Gospel was the first to be written. It is the shortest gospel, containing only sixteen chapters, but like many short things, it packs quite a punch. There is a noticeable and palpable sense of urgency in the narrative. Mark is a man on a mission to tell the story of Jesus. He certainly hits the ground running in these opening verses of his wonderful Gospel.

One of the most striking verses today is John the Baptist's promise that while he baptised with water, Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit. Have you been baptised in the Holy Spirit? Of course, by God's grace we received the Holy Spirit when we were baptised (many of us as children, some as adults), but the fullness of the Holy Spirit is brought to completion by the laying on of hands when we receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. So, in baptism we are baptised in water and the Spirit, and the grace of our baptism is brought to completion when we are prayed over by the Bishop with the laying on of his hands at Confirmation.

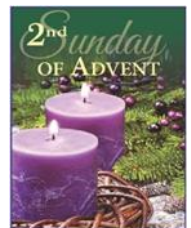


However, can we be baptised in the Spirit again? The Renewal movement points to this grace, a naked grace as it were, which God poured out for the renewal of the Church. But we must always remember that God's Holy Spirit blows wherever it wills, and our being renewed or baptised in the Holy Spirit isn't dependant on belonging to this or that new movement. The criterion for being baptised in the Spirit is wanting to know, deep in our hearts, a renewal and refreshment by God's Holy Spirit. In a very real way this grace is certainly available whenever we renew our baptismal promises but also through seeking from God a fresh outpouring of his grace.

This grace is available to us in a special way during the season of Advent when we draw to the great truth of the Incarnation - the Word made flesh, the Word among us, God made man. For the one who is baptised in the Holy Spirit, these truths are not on ice - cold, impervious, and unable to have an impact on our lives. No, on the contrary, they are living, vital, dynamic and reach deeply into our hearts so we can proclaim the Gospel of our faith with joy and confidence.

My Dear Friends in Christ Jesus,

As we begin our second week of Advent, we are all very conscious of the spiritual journey that we're making that will lead us to the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ at Christmas. Let us keep our eyes firmly fixed on the Lord and allow him to guide us through this holy Advent Season, so that as we arrive in the little town of Bethlehem this Christmas, we will be able to make our way to the humble stable and fall on our knees at the manger worshipping the new-born Christ-child. The Nativity Story is so beautiful and simple, and I advocate that all parents take time with your children to talk about the birth of Jesus as we prepare for Christmas. As I mentioned last weekend, it would be wonderful if you have a crib at home to



put it in a place of prominence, this really does capture the imagination of our little ones and helps us to keep in mind what Christmas is all about.

COMING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS If you know of anyone who has lapsed from the practice of their Catholic faith; it could be a family member or a friend or colleague, why not invite them to join you for one of the Christmas Masses, in this way, like John the Baptist you are being a herald of the Gospel message. Covid had a devastating effect on the whole world, and every priest I know talks of the many people that did not return to the practice of their faith. These are our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, and they are part of our spiritual family, and we miss them! Also, over these next weeks of Advent, perhaps you could drop off a parish newsletter at people's homes. Next weekend there will be a special Christmas Card with Christmas Message and the times of all the Masses over the Christmas period up to St Stephen's Day. Please keep this in a very safe place as it will indicate the times of all additional Masses & Penance Service.



ADVENT PARISH PENITENTIAL SERVICE Will take place on Monday 18th December at 7.30pm. I would encourage all our parishioners to come and celebrate the Sacrament of God's Reconciliation. If you haven't celebrated the Sacrament for a long time, this year may be your opportunity to really experience God's healing love through Sacramental forgiveness. What more fitting way to prepare for the birthday of the Lord than to receive the Sacrament. There will be several priests to hear Confessions throughout the Cathedral, and there will be Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament throughout Confessions to assist and help with personal and private prayer.

May God Bless You All

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. John", with a horizontal line underneath.



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 cater for the students, but could I make an 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, (sadly, I can't touch any of these being diabetic - 😞). 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.

ELECTRONIC CHRISTMAS OFFERING:

This year, as always, envelopes will be available for us to make our 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. This year your Christmas Offering can also be made electronically. We just need to transfer the money 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

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 Brownies; next week will be the turn of the Catenians. Why not come along for a cuppa and a chat?

THE NEXT CHAPTER OF CANONS MASS will take place in the Cathedral on **Monday 11th December** at **10.30 a.m.** All are very welcome to attend. Please note, this Mass will be in place of the usual morning Mass.

JOURNEY OF FAITH PROGRAM: Our next meeting, Session 10, will take place on **Thursday 14th December** at **7.30 p.m.** in Clergy House. The Theme: Sacraments of **BAPTISM & CONFIRMATION.**

NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS SERVICE will take place in the Cathedral on **Sunday 17th December** at **4.00 p.m.** A celebration of prayers, readings and carols presided over by Bishop Alan Williams. With music by the Brentwood Cathedral Choir. Please do join us for this very special celebration.

READERS & EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS The new Rota's start next weekend **16/17th December**; it includes the Christmas period. Please ensure that you enter the date in your diary as only one Reader & Eucharistic Minister is down for each Mass - Many thanks for your support. messina21@btinternet.com 01277 231593.

PLEASE PRAY for the repose of the soul of Sheena Docherty who died recently.

Details of Sheena's funeral service 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 lunchtime recital at 12 noon on **Saturday 30th December** in the Cathedral.

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

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.

THE CHILDREN'S LITURGY GROUP would welcome some new team members to join the rota to help lead the Liturgy for the children at the 9.30am Mass. This is a voluntary role that would require an enhanced DBS check. If you are able to help on a monthly basis, please contact Clergy House; we would be very pleased to hear from you.

PARISH OFFICE HOURS are Monday to Thursday from 8.30 a.m. - 3.00 p.m.

THE NEW DIOCESAN DIRECTORY 2024 is now available for purchase from the narthex - £2.95 per copy. Please place money in the wall safe marked "Publications / Booklets". Many thanks.

REPOSITORY We have a number of Christmas items such as religious cards, statues etc available for purchase from the repository; please do stop by and have a look.

FRIDAY LUNCHES every Friday from 12-2.00 p.m. everyone is welcome to come along to the parish hall for a light lunch and chat. Why not come along and give it a try? All ages are welcome and please pass the word on to anyone else who might be interested (e.g., neighbours, friends, colleagues). All are very welcome!

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.

We have been reliably informed that the Council carpark is open on a Sunday and free to park so you may also wish to consider parking there instead.

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 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 - for more information.

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 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 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 - or visit 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 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

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

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
			

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
			