

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

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**Meleg**

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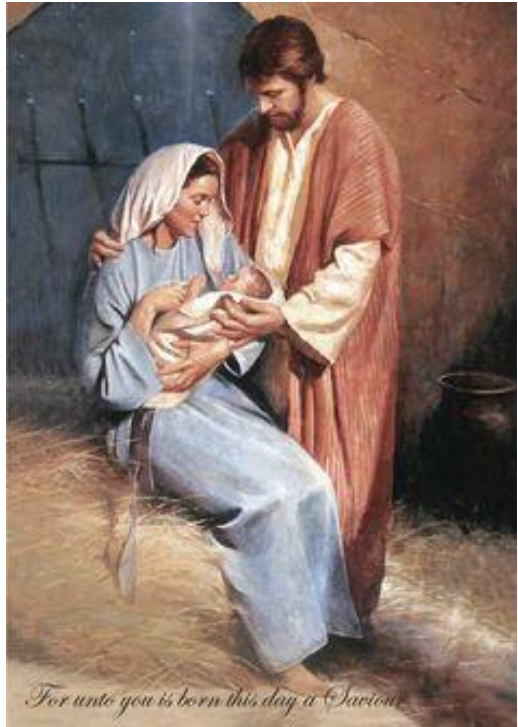
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**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (C)  
Sunday 22nd December 2024**

**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 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. 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. Also, 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.

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 this afternoon will be spectacular as always; we are so lucky to have such a wonderful music tradition, musicians, and choir director on a weekly basis.



On a very personal note, on behalf of Fr Matúš 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 already 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!

**THE NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS SERVICE** will take place in the Cathedral **TODAY** 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.

**Fr John & Fr Matúš wish you and all your loved ones a very happy & Holy Christmas.**

### **HODIE CHRISTUS NATUS EST**

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

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**A VERY WARM WELCOME** I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Fr Joseph Laparous & Fr Joseph Brodeur, student priests from the Pontifical North American College. Various other seminarians will be with us over Christmas and the New Year. I will cook and 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. Thanking you all for your kindness and generosity while the students are here.

**YOUR CHRISTMAS OFFERING** This year, as always, envelopes will be available for you to make your Christmas Offering, which, as you know, is an opportunity in every Catholic Parish for parishioners to give a Christmas gift to Fr John & Fr Matúš; this gift forms the major part of their annual salary. If you are able

to Gift Aid, please ensure that you use your parish GA envelopes. There is also the contactless machine in the narthex if you so wish, and the QR codes on the Cathedral notice board. This year your Christmas Offering can also be made electronically. Simply transfer your offering to the parish bank account using the reference 'Xmas Offering'. The details of the bank account are as follows: **Account Name: Brentwood Cathedral, Sort Code: 40-13-22, Account Number: 30217492**



May God bless you all during this Holy Advent Season.

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

**HOLY YEAR 2025 - PILGRIMS OF HOPE** On Christmas Eve our Holy Father, Pope Francis, will open the Holy Year Door in St Peter's Basilica, marking the beginning of the Holy Year 2025. The concept of a Holy Year has deep roots in the history of the Catholic Church, and is centred around pilgrimage to Rome, spiritual renewal and the forgiveness of sins. This tradition originated in ancient Jewish custom and was revived for Christian communities in the Middle Ages by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300. The theme will be Pilgrims of Hope, and as a parish, we are going to focus on the Holy Eucharist, giving everyone the opportunity to deepen their love of Jesus Christ through the Holy Eucharist. There will be Lenten Talks on the Eucharist, Forty Hours of Eucharistic Prayer, and various other events. Bishop Alan will preside at the 11.30 a.m. Mass on Sunday 29th December, the Feast of the Holy Family, to inaugurate the Holy Year in our Diocese.



**PLEASE NOTE** that the parish office will be closed for the Christmas period from Friday 20th December and will reopen again on **Thursday 2nd January 2025.**

**PLEASE PRAY** for the repose of the soul of Kevin Gash, Tony Bortoli, Sr Sarah Higgins and Sr DePaul Maher who died recently; funeral details are as follows:

*Kevin's Requiem Mass will be celebrated in the Cathedral on Thursday 2nd January 2025 at 11.00 a.m.*

*Tony's Requiem Mass will be celebrated in the Cathedral on Tuesday 7th January 2025 at 11.00 a.m. are not yet known.*

*Sr Sarah's Requiem Mass will be celebrated in the Cathedral on Wednesday 8th January 2025 at 11.00 a.m.*

*Sr DePaul's Requiem Mass will be celebrated in the Cathedral on Friday 10th January 2025 at 11.00 a.m.*

May they rest in the peace of Christ.

**COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS** today will be hosted by the Catenians; next week will be the turn of the St Helen's Ladies Group.

**JOURNEY IN FAITH COURSE** The next meeting will be on **Thursday 2nd January 2025** and the theme will be: **RECONCILIATION Sin! Why the need to go to Confession.**

**THE FRIDAY FRIENDSHIP LUNCH** will resume again on **Friday 3rd January 2025**; please note that there will be no Friday group on 10th January as the halls will be otherwise occupied.

**CHILDREN'S LITURGY** will resume again in the new year on **Sunday 12th January.**

**THE PARISH YOUNG ADULTS GROUP** will next meet on **Sunday 12th January 2025** after the 6.30 p.m. Mass and walk to a local pub to share a drink and conversation together. All aged 18-35 are very welcome, we will gather outside the Cathedral after Mass and walk down together. The group usually meets on the first Sunday of every month (the next meeting will be on Sunday 2nd February).

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR YOUNG CATHOLICS** between 16-25 years who volunteer on a project abroad or to assist a pilgrim to Lourdes is available via [catenianbursary.com](http://catenianbursary.com) Email, [peterdowse69@gmail.com](mailto:peterdowse69@gmail.com) for more information.

**THE DIOCESAN LOURDES PILGRIMAGE**, led by Bp Alan, will be from **Friday 18 July - Friday 25 July 2025**. The flights will be Southend to Lourdes. Details, including how to book, will follow.

**REFERENCES FOR WORK AND OTHER POSITIONS** Fr John receives many requests for references which he is happy to write for people that he knows. However, it is not helpful to mention to him in passing that you have given his name as a referee or for him to receive unexpected reference requests. Therefore, before you give his name as a referee, please ensure that you make an appointment to meet with Fr John first to discuss the position you are applying for and the nature of the reference required. Thank you.

**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 below:



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.

**JUST FOR INFORMATION** Clergy days off are Tuesday (Fr John) and Wednesday (Fr Matúš); if you need to contact them at these times, please leave a message and they will call you back when they are able.

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

**THE HOLY HOUR** of prayer and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament takes place on a 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.

**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: Sylvia Allum, Merle Anderson, Alistair Bailey, Yvonne Ball, Hermine Bayley, Eda Bright, Roisin Cassels, Keith Chester, David Cutter, Dermot Dalton, 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, Peter Madden, Romek Matyszczuk, Tony Maule, John McCarthy, Carmel Micallef, Stephanie Murray, Harry Newman, Barney O'Driscoll, Joe O'Hertihy, Matthew Pegg, Steven Poole, Geraldine Sheehan, Robin Shenton, David Spring, Mary Stretch, Tim, TCT, Siobhan Vaughan and all our sick.



## GENERAL NEWS

**WALSINGHAM HOUSE TEAM 25/26** Applications are now open for the volunteer retreat team at Walsingham House. If you are in Yr13 or finishing university and enjoy working with young people, then a year on the retreat team could be the perfect next step. Live and work as part of a young Catholic Christian community, sharing your faith and helping to run retreats for the young people of Brentwood diocese. For more information then please see the website: [www.bcys.net/whabbotswick/be-on-team/](http://www.bcys.net/whabbotswick/be-on-team/) or email [clairebailey@brcdt.org](mailto:clairebailey@brcdt.org)

**READINGS FOR THE SEASON OF ADVENT** Fr Adrian Graffy, parish priest of Gidea Park and member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, has prepared reflections on all the Mass readings for the Season of Advent. To access these readings, go to [www.whatgoodnews.org](http://www.whatgoodnews.org) and click on 'Scripture Readings' and then 'Advent Readings'.

**CAN YOU VOLUNTEER** at the St John Bosco Children's Camp next summer? Applications are now open for anyone aged 17+ to volunteer for a week at the end of July 2025. From helping in the kitchen to running sports and other activities, your skills will mean that 100 children have a wonderful holiday. For most of the children, it is their only summer holiday. The Camp is a special work of Caritas Brentwood. More information - including training date and DBS requirements, along with volunteering FAQs - can all be found at [www.boscocamp.co.uk](http://www.boscocamp.co.uk). Applications for children to come to Camp will open in the spring.

**ISLAM STUDY DAY** In 2025 we mark sixty years since the promulgation of Nostra Aetate, the inter-faith document of Vatican II. We are delighted to welcome Sidra Naeem, distinguished teacher and chair of Havering Interfaith, who will speak about Islam. The talk will take place on **Saturday 18th January 2025** from 11.00 (11.00 GMT) in the hall at the Catholic Church of Christ the Eternal High Priest, in Gidea Park. The talk will also be available by livestream free of charge at [www.whatgoodnews.org](http://www.whatgoodnews.org) and will be available subsequently on

the same website. The church is close to Gidea Park station (Elizabeth Line). Please bring a packed lunch. Coffee available from 10.30. Do join us.

**WORD ON FIRE UK BIBLE CONFERENCE** Join Bishop Robert Barron and thousands of other Catholics from across the UK for Evangelisation & Culture: The Bible. Come to the Excel Centre in East London this February to gain a deeper appreciation of the Sacred Scriptures and their relevance to the Church's mission today. Date: **Friday 21st - Saturday 22nd February 2025** at the Excel Centre, East London. Speakers Include: Bishop Robert Barron, N.T. Wright, Professor Tracey Rowland and more. For more information and to register, please visit: [//wordonfire.org/the-bible-event](http://wordonfire.org/the-bible-event).

**MENS' SPIRITUAL EXERCISES** A 5-day version of the Ignatian Exercises offered specifically for men (whether lay or ordained) **31 March - 5 April 2025**; this retreat will be preached by the Benedictine Monks of St Joseph's Abbey, France. Founded in 1988, this community has retained its charism of a specific apostolate to men and of engaging them through a shortened version of the Ignatian Exercises. One-to-one direction will be offered alongside the talks. Priests are welcome to attend and concelebrate or celebrate their own Mass. Information or to book visit: <https://christianheritagecentre.com/events/mens-spiritual-exercises/>

**VACANCY** St Joseph the Worker Catholic Primary School, Hutton are looking to appoint a deputy headteacher for April 2025. For more information and a full advert, visit our school website: <https://st-joseph-the-worker-catholic-primary-school.secure-primariesite.net/recruitment-1/> Closing date for applications: **Tuesday 28th January 2025** at 12 Noon. Visits welcome. Please contact Mrs Lesley Willats on 01277 227282 or [admin@st-josephworker.essex.sch.uk](mailto:admin@st-josephworker.essex.sch.uk) for an application pack or to arrange a visit.

**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:



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
			