

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

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**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (C)
Sunday 15th December 2024**

Spiritual Reflection:

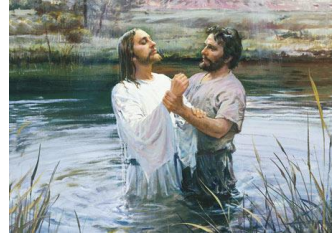
What does God want for you during this Advent season? What does the Spirit want to do within and for you? What blessings await you? What grace and anointing will be poured out upon you? We don't tend to think in this way, having learnt not to expect or hope for too much so that we won't be disappointed.

However, this isn't a Christian way to think because Christians expect great things.

Many centuries before Jesus came, the prophet Zephaniah said: 'The Lord God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.' This Advent, God wants to renew you in his love. We can anticipate and rely on the truth that this is what God wants for us.



John the Baptist shows us how this renewal occurs: through repentance and turning away from sin. Of course, we cannot confess our sins to God on our own, but the best way to do this is through the sacrament of reconciliation; truly the sacrament of mercy and forgiveness.



It can be hard to acknowledge our sinfulness and weakness. It takes courage and a willingness to let God's light shine into the deepest and darkest parts of us. This can be a lonely and daunting journey, but God is with us. There is no sin that God cannot forgive. There is no sinner beyond his mercy and forgiveness. There is only grace, mercy and forgiveness as we are renewed in God's love. So don't be afraid; take courage and be assured of his love and mercy.

'Our brokenness is the wound through which the full power of God can penetrate our being and transfigure us in God. Loneliness is not something from which we must flee but the place from which we can cry out to God, where God will find us and we can find God...Yes, through our wounds the power of God can penetrate and become like rivers of living water to irrigate the arid earth within us. Thus, we may irrigate the arid earth of others, so that hope and love are reborn.' (Jean Vanier)

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!

A BIG THANK YOU from the bottom of my heart to the whole parish community for the sterling effort at our first Bazaar. It was truly a wonderful occasion, and your response this year has been extraordinary and exceptional! The incredible generosity shown by the whole parish



over the past couple of months has been very humbling. I never doubted in any way whatsoever that we could not have a very successful Bazaar and Grand Draw. First and foremost, I thank all the parishioners who donated gifts and items to the Bazaar; and all those who donated new gifts and money gifts for the Grand Draw. There were some exceptional prizes, (all donated). My heartfelt thanks go to all the parishioners who so generously gave of their time at the Bazaar, working on the various stalls; those who helped to set up, and clear up. Thank you to all who baked cakes, pies, mince pies and Christmas cakes, your kindness is very much appreciated. A big thank you to the money counting team. Hopefully I will have a final amount to announce at the masses this weekend.

I appreciate that the preparation for a Bazaar is a lot of hard work, but we have all worked together, and the amazing thing is, that if everyone does a little, a lot gets done! For me personally, I have loved the community aspect of our Bazaar, working together and really getting to know a lot more people. I hope and pray that you all enjoyed it as well.

If you have won a GRAND DRAW prize and were not at the Bazaar to collect it, all prizes will be transferred to Clergy House where they can be collected during office hours. Please bring along the counterfoil to be matched by the winning ticket.

A BIG THANK YOU TO ONE AND ALL!

**CATHEDRAL PARISH ADVENT
PENITENTIAL SERVICE - Monday**

16th December at 7.30 p.m. This

is an invitation to the whole parish community to avail yourselves of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in

advance of Christmas. What more fitting way to celebrate the sacrament in preparation for the birth of the Lord once again

into our lives this Christmas. If it has been a long time since you last went to Confession, please think seriously about attending on Monday evening. There will be several Priests to help with the celebration of the Sacrament. The Priests are only too willing to help you with your confession and the advice that they give. It's so consoling to know that God's loving and merciful forgiveness is unconditional - we are totally freed from the burden of sin.



THE NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS SERVICE will take place in the Cathedral next **Sunday 22nd 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.

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS & THE CRIB One of the most famous



Christmas Flowers is the Poinsettia. The vivid red and green, very much Christmas colours really make it stand out. You will be very interested to know that a new crib has been built for the Cathedral; my sincere and grateful thanks to Joe O'Sullivan and his friends. It's a lot bigger than our previous one, and, as part of the decoration of the crib this year, it would be wonderful to place some poinsettias in and around the crib. If there are any individuals or families who would like to remember a deceased loved one at the Crib, please purchase a poinsettia and place the name of the individual to be remembered on the pot. I have always remembered my deceased parents in this way each Christmas. The crib will be decorated on Monday 23rd December. Thank you!

VISITING PRIESTS & SEMINARIANS FOR CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS:

There will be two priests and several seminarians from the Pontifical North American College in Rome, who will be visiting us over the Christmas /New Year holidays. For the past 19 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. 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). Thanking you all in anticipation.



ANNUAL PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD The insert in your newsletter this week is our Christmas card to you and includes details of all Masses & Services over the Christmas and New Year period. Please do keep it somewhere safe especially for the times of Masses.

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 John'.

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 PRAY for the repose of the soul of Peter Barlow, Kevin Gash and Tony Bortoli who died recently; funeral details are as follows:

Peter's Requiem Mass will be celebrated in the Cathedral on Friday 20th December 2024 at 11.00 a.m.

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

Details of Tony's funeral are not yet known.

May they rest in the peace of Christ.

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.**

COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS today will be hosted by the family of a Scout attending the Essex Scouts Expedition to Zanzibar 2026 to raise money to fund this trip; next week will be the turn of the Catenians.

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 has now concluded for this year and will resume again on **Friday 3rd January 2025.**

CHILDREN'S LITURGY will hold their final session of the year today and 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).

THE NEW DIOCESAN DIRECTORY 2025 is now available for purchase from the narthex - £3.20 per copy. Please place money in the wall safe marked "Publications / Booklets". Many thanks.

HUTTON PARISH CHRISTMAS HAMPER Please help us raise some much-needed funds for our parish (St. Joseph The Worker Church), while also being in with a chance of winning this magnificent hamper. Just pick up an envelope from the church, write your name and contact number on the envelope, put a £5 note inside, and hand in the completed envelope. That's all you need to do! The draw will be made on Sunday 22nd December after the 10.30 Mass.

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 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'Herlihy, Matthew Pegg, Steven Poole, Geraldine Sheehan, Robin Shenton, David Spring, Mary Stretch, Tim, TCT, Siobhan Vaughan and all our sick.

GENERAL NEWS

CHRISTMAS MARANATHA at The Sion Community, Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood, CM15 9BX, is on **Thursday 18th December**. The evening begins with Mass at 7 p.m. followed by Prayer and Praise and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Our Celebrant is Fr. Arnaud from St Anthony's, Forest Gate and everyone is very welcome.

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/ or email 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 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. Applications for children to come to Camp will open in the spring.

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 come to the end of our 40th anniversary year, 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 over the years. 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.

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 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 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
			