

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

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FEAST OF THE EXHALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS (C)

Sunday 14 September 2025

Spiritual Reflection:

The Cross was the Roman Army's preferred method of execution - the equivalent of the gallows of old or guillotine or the electric chair or lethal injection. The cross was feared, hated, despised. Doesn't that make today's feast - the Exaltation of the Holy Cross - sound like a contradiction.

The Book of numbers 21:4-9 gives us the background to John 3:14-15. God had punished the Israelites with a plague of serpents; yet, heeding their pleas for mercy, he instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and raise it up high on a pole. By gazing upon this image, victims of snakebite were healed. God's provision in the desert of physical life for the Israelites foreshadowed God's provision at Calvary of eternal life for all peoples. As Jesus said: 'and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.' Not only was Jesus 'lifted up' in pain and shame on the cross, but also 'lifted up' in a cloud when he ascended to glory. In the Creed we declare, 'For our sake he was crucified under



Pontius Pilate...' but we also affirm '...he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.' (Painting by Velazquez)

In ancient basilicas and Romanesque art, the cross is represented in a festive manner - often spangled with gems - and Christ is enthroned upon it in royal robes, crowned with gems instead of thorns. The focus here is not the sin that necessitated the cross or the suffering produced by the cross, but the effects of the cross - salvation, reconciliation, peace, eternal life.

Yet, while salvation is freely available, it must be appropriated by faith. Just as the Israelites gazed upon the bronze serpent we too stand at the foot of the cross and gaze upon the Crucified One now exalted as the Christ. As Paul declares: 'For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.'

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Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,

Today we celebrate National Education Sunday. This marks the beginning of the academic year. It is a day for prayer, celebration, and support for Catholic schools, universities, and everyone involved in the education sector, encouraging the community to give thanks and pray for the year ahead.



Historically the origin of Catholic Schools in this country has its roots in parish life. After Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the Catholic Church's priority was education; establishing schools and colleges, teacher's training, and with the growth of the Catholic population more schools needed to be built. The Faithful People of God, spent decades fundraising in their own localities, establishing their own parochial schools. Many of these schools were run by Religious Sisters, who truly enriched our Catholic Education system in this country. Today we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us; all of those who sacrificed so much to give us a wonderful Catholic Education Service.

Probably for the most part, we have all benefitted from Catholic Education. But we must never take our schools for granted, and the emphasis should always be on the word 'Catholic.' When School, Parish and Home are all working together to give our children a comprehensive understanding of their Catholic Faith, then by the time they leave Junior School & Secondary School, along with the faith example from home, every child should have a rounded and deeper commitment to the practice

of faith. If any part of that threefold model, or all of it is missing, the likelihood will be lapsation in the practice of faith. Which is sad!

### **RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA)**

**- JOURNEY OF FAITH:** This week we began our RCIA

- Journey of faith Programme, thank you to several enquirers who turned up last Thursday It's still not too late to join the programme. The RCIA is a systematic Programme of Instruction in the Roman Catholic Faith, covering all areas of Catholicism. We meet weekly at **7.00pm on a Thursday**, and Fr John will give an instruction on a particular topic,



and the enquirers will have the opportunity to ask questions and have informal discussion. There is a small study book that I ask you to purchase, it's called Evangelium £9.95, it will help you with each of the topics mentioned. Also, we have a wonderful source of information that can be gleaned from the Internet if you Google a particular subject matter. If you haven't had an opportunity for a one-to-one chat with Fr John, could you call Clergy House (01277 265235) and arrange an appointment as soon as possible.



### **CATHEDRAL PARISH CONFIRMATION PROGRAMME**

**2025/26:** At a recent meeting of the Confirmation Catechists, we have made a unanimous decision to open the Confirmation Programme from Year 10 - to Year 13. Obviously, this will change the dynamic slightly, as there will probably be more candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation especially in this

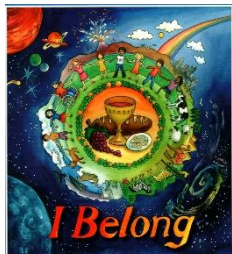
first year. Total commitment to the practice of the faith is required, meaning weekly attendance at Holy Mass. Each candidate will receive their own personal attendance card to be signed each week by one of the Priests or Deacons. This is a call to all students from Years 10 -13 to seriously think about the Sacrament of Confirmation. There will be an Information Evening in the Parish Hall at **7.00pm on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September** for prospective Candidates and their parents. All Confirmandi are required to attend weekly Sunday Mass fulfilling their obligation. Attendance Document will be given to each candidate.

**CONFIRMATION CATECHISTS:** As the programme will change slightly with additional Confirmandi, we will need some additional help with Confirmation Catechists. If you are willing to help, please speak to Fr Matúš. If there are any RE teachers willing to help, we would be truly grateful. Thank you!

**CATHEDRAL PARISH BAZAAR:** I know we are only just heading into Autumn, but forward planning is extremely important. I have set a date for a Bazaar Committee Meeting for **Friday 19th September 2025 at 7.30pm** in the Small Hall.



We had a truly wonderful and successful Bazaar last year. A real family occasion for the whole parish community. You might like to start thinking about the Bazaar sorting out new or nearly new items for the various stalls. If you would like to be involved in the Parish Bazaar, please do attend our meeting.

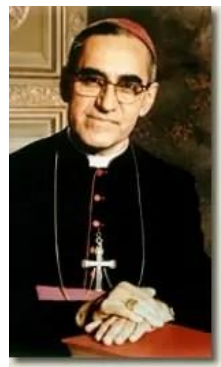


**FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PROGRAMME 2025/2026:**

Once again we begin to prepare for the next First Holy Communion Programme. If your child is eligible to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist (Year 4 as of September 2025), please seriously think about this next step in their spiritual formation. The prerequisites are that you are practicing Roman Catholics attending weekly Sunday Mass, and that you live in the Cathedral Parish.

Parents' Information Evening will take place on **Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm** in the Cathedral. We will need a copy of your child's Baptismal Certificate. Also, if there are Parishioners who would be willing to serve as First Communion Catechists, please see Fr John or Victoria Campling.

**ARCHSBISHOP SAINT ÓSCAR ROMERO:** Archbishop John Wilson (Archbishop of Southwark), will be giving a Talk and Presentation on Saint Óscar Romero, in the Parish Hall on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm. Titled: 'Preacher of Hope, The Life and Witness of St Óscar Romero.' Archbishop John has made a special study of St Óscar Romero, and it is a great honour and privilege to invite him to our Cathedral Parish and Diocese for this talk. **BRIEF BIOGRAPHY:** Saint Óscar Romero was a Salvadoran archbishop and a powerful voice for justice who was assassinated in 1980 for speaking out against human rights violations and the government's repression during El Salvador's civil war. Born in 1917, he became a priest, bishop, and eventually Archbishop of San Salvador. Father Rutilio Grande radicalised Romero, leading him to use his weekly radio sermons to denounce injustice, defend the poor, and ultimately urge the military to stop the repression, which led to his own assassination while celebrating Mass the next day.



Archbishop John has written a spiritual book on Saint Óscar entitled the 'Romero Rosary.' Copies will be available for purchase, and Archbishop John will sign them.

### **APPLICATIONS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES FOR SEPTEMBER 2026**

If you are anticipating applying for a Secondary School place for your child for September 2026, please make a note in your diary that the only signing date will be Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October from 4.00pm - 7.00pm. This will take place in the Sacristy by the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. **At this meeting the Certificate of Catholic Practice will only be signed by Fr John for those who are practicing Catholics (Weekly attendance at Holy Mass).** This means your child's attendance as well. If you are not a regular practicing Catholic, please follow the instructions below. Please note:

- a) Fr John will know those families who have been practicing their faith by coming to Sunday Mass. These families will receive a Certificate of Catholic Practice
- b) If you have not been practicing your faith, please do not approach Fr John for a Certificate of Catholic Practice as he will not be able to provide you with this document. Instead apply directly to the Catholic School of your choice.
- c) If you are applying for a non-Catholic school that requires evidence of religious practice and you have been practicing your faith, please simply apply directly to the non-Catholic School of your choice.
- d) Please note that Fr John will not supply additional references or documentation to parents who may go to appeal for a place at a non-Catholic school.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Fr John will be available only at the following time in the Cathedral Sacristy to see parents who are registered as parishioners and who are practicing their faith by attending Sunday Mass. There is no need to make an appointment.

#### **SECONDARY SCHOOL APPLICATIONS**

Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October: 4.00pm - 7.00pm  
Please ensure you make a note of this date

**SECOND COLLECTION** - There will be a second collection this weekend for The Catholic Education Service.

**COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS TODAY** will be hosted by the Brownies; next week will be the turn of the Scouts. Please do join us.

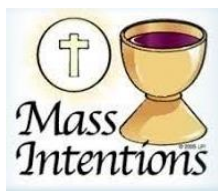
**MISSIO BOXES** If you have not yet returned your Missio box, could you please do so, as soon as possible, either to the narthex or Clergy House.

**AUTUMN FOODBANK COLLECTION** - Please consider making a contribution to the parish food bank collection that will be taking place on the ***weekend of 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> September***. All the donations go to the Brentwood Food Bank to help local people in need. Donations of non-perishable items such as tinned meat/vegetables/fruit as well as dried goods, toiletries and treats will be gratefully received. If you wish to donate money instead, please place cash in an envelope clearly marked with 'Brentwood Foodbank Donation' or make cheques payable to Brentwood Foodbank.



**MARRIAGE PREPARATION:** If you are planning on getting married in 2026, please could you contact Fr. John or Fr Matúš as soon as possible, especially if you're getting married outside of the parish, we need several months, for marriage preparation and instruction, plus all the administration, which is quite time consuming! If getting married abroad we need at least nine months' notice. Please contact Clergy

House, Tel No: 01277 265235



**MASS INTENTIONS AT THE CATHEDRAL:** The origin of a Mass Stipend is very ancient, from the early practice of the faithful providing bread, wine, and other necessities for the celebration of Mass and the sustenance of clergy, evolving into a monetary donation around the eighth century to support priests'

livelihoods and their ministry. Today they form part of the Priest's Annual Income, as we do not receive an official salary. Every day a Mass Intention is celebrated at Brentwood Cathedral. Parishioners book Mass intentions for various occasions, anniversaries, birthdays, deceased family members, special intentions, Golden & Silver Weddings, Get Well Intentions, and many other occasions. There are several free spaces available over the next few months, as we haven't had many Intentions of late. If you would like to Book a Mass intention, especially for anniversaries, to avoid disappointment with specific dates please book early.

May God bless you all

**THE FRIDAY FRIENDSHIP LUNCH** will return on ***Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> September***. All are welcome to come along to the parish hall (***12 noon - 2.00 p.m.***) for a light lunch, cakes and drinks and most importantly, friendly faces and an opportunity to meet up with others.

**PILGRIMS OF HOPE PRAYER GROUP** - for this special jubilee year why not join the parish Pilgrims of Hope prayer group? It couldn't be easier. The group pray ***every Monday evening at 8.00pm***. Prayers and reflections are shared on a WhatsApp group with each person praying privately wherever they find themselves. If you'd like to join the WhatsApp group then please give your mobile number and name to the parish secretary.

**THE HOLY HOUR** of prayer and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament takes place on a ***Monday evening from 6.30 - 7.30pm***. 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 - 11.00am. 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, Heidi Brenke, Eda Bright, Roisin Cassels, Esmeralda Chester, Keith Chester, Dermot Dalton, David, Iris Davis, Patricia Decup, Sheila Deed, Charlotte Donnelly, Margaret F, Rebecca Florendo, Angela Gavin, Julian Goode, Deacon Nicholas Holmes, Wong Su Hwa, Jess, Lisa Landy, Suzie Law, Lawrence, Peter Madden, Romek Matyszczyk, Tony Maule, John McCarthy, Carmel Micallef, Stephanie Murray, Harry Newman, Barney O'Driscoll, Joe O'Herlihy, Steven Poole, Margaret Ross, Geraldine Sheehan, Robin Shenton, David Spring, Mary Stretch, Tim, TCT, Siobhan Vaughan, Kalcho Yankov and all our sick.

**MARANATHA** The next session of Maranatha will be held at the Sion Community, Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood, CM15 9BX on ***Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> September***. This will be our last session of Maranatha at the Sion Community, however we are looking at ways to continue in 2026.

**CELEBRATING VATICAN II** As the sixtieth anniversary of the conclusion of Vatican II approaches, Fr Adrian Graffy will lead a study day entitled 'Vatican II and its Popes'. The event will take place at the Catholic parish of Christ the Eternal High Priest in Gidea Park (RM2 6DH) on ***Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September from 10.30am***. Entrance is free, and a recording of the talk will be available subsequently on [www.whatgoodnews.org](http://www.whatgoodnews.org)

**SION COMMUNITY - 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY** All parishioners of Brentwood Cathedral are invited to our Masses celebrating 40 years of Sion Community: at ***12 noon on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> September and at 2.00pm on Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> September.*** Everyone is welcome at either or both Masses to help us celebrate this great milestone in our community.

**ST HELEN'S CATHOLIC INFANT SCHOOL PROSPECTIVE RECEPTION PARENTS 2026-27** There will be tours of the school for prospective parents (Reception 2026) on **Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> November, Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> November, Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> November and Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> November at 9.30am.** Please contact the school office to book a slot: [admin@st-helens-inf.essex.sch.uk](mailto:admin@st-helens-inf.essex.sch.uk) or 01277 215626

**ST HELEN'S CATHOLIC INFANT SCHOOL CONSULTATION: LOWERING THE AGE RANGE** St Helen's Catholic Infant School are consulting regarding the proposal to lower the age range of the school to from 4 to 3 years old and operate a school run term-time only early years and childcare setting from 8.30am to 3pm with additional paid hours from 8am and until 4pm to support working families. This provision will cater for a maximum of 26 places and will offer Funded Early Education Entitlement funded for early years (30 hours) to support eligible working families. The proposal is for this new early years setting to open from **September 2026.**

- The consultation period will run for 4 weeks from Monday 1st September 2025 until Monday 29th September 2025
- If you have any questions or comments about the proposal, please email the School Business Manager, Mrs C. Onslow: [office@st-helens-inf.essex.sch.uk](mailto:office@st-helens-inf.essex.sch.uk)
- Alternatively, the school will be holding a drop-in session for members of the community, to answer any questions, on Wednesday 10th September: 3.30pm-4.30pm
- You can also visit the school's website for further information and complete the survey available or please pick up a survey from the school office and return by Monday 29th September 2025

**CAFOD: RESPONSE IN GAZA** Your donations to Gaza since the start of the conflict have been a vital lifeline. Right now, CAFOD's partner, Caritas Jerusalem, is delivering essential medical treatment to displaced people and providing medicines to treat chronic illnesses. We have helped 1,400 households with cash to buy supplies in the last month and we are currently feeding 2,000 people with new stocks of flour and rice. Despite the restrictions on aid coming into Gaza, CAFOD's local partners are working tirelessly to help people. And with your ongoing support, they will do all in their power to keep doing so. You can find out more about how you can make a difference in Gaza at [cafod.org.uk](http://cafod.org.uk). Thank



you for backing our work through holding collections for our Family Fast Day appeals and for continuing to [pray for peace](#) in the Middle East.

As Cardinal Pizzaballa (Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem) says, “Christ is not absent from Gaza. He is there - crucified in the wounded, buried under rubble, and yet present in every act of mercy, every candle in the darkness, every hand extended to the suffering.”

**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.

## **GENERAL NEWS**

**SPUC - JOIN THE FIGHTBACK** The devastating defeats of the last few months need to be a turning point where we fight back to build a culture of life. That's why SPUC has launched a national *Join the Fightback* campaign - to urgently mobilise support, build resistance, and grow a stronger pro-life presence across the country.

**The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) National Conference 2025:** SPUC's National Pro-Life Conference takes place from 19th to 21st September 2025 at Yarnfield Park, Staffordshire. Join us to hear from expert pro-life speakers from around the world, meet likeminded people and be a part of the fightback working to rebuild a culture of life in the UK. More information and booking: [//spuc.org.uk/spuc-national-conference](http://spuc.org.uk/spuc-national-conference)

**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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