

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

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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (A) JUBILEE YEAR - 'Pilgrims of Hope'

Sunday, 14 December 2025

Spiritual Reflection:

Faith isn't always a bright glowing light but rather a faint flicker to which we cling. We walk by faith and by sight and perceive God as in a mirror, dimly and only in part. The truth is that, for many, faith is lived in a fog of darkness and is often put to the test. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church so eloquently expresses it: 'The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice and death, seem to contradict the Good News; they can shake our faith and become a temptation against it'.



This was the experience of John the Baptist as he languished in Herod's prison. As he awaited his fate, this great forerunner of the Lord, the last Old Testament prophet, probably shackled and no doubt hungry and tired, succumbed to doubt and uncertainty. Needing reassurance, he sent his disciples to ask the Lord, 'Are you the one who is to come, or

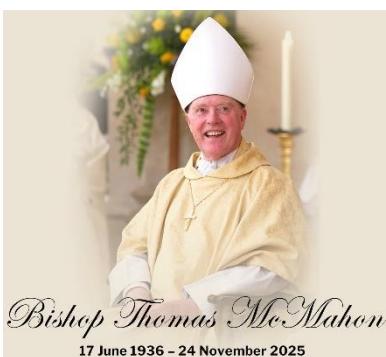
should we expect someone else?' Jesus pointed to his miracles and the power of God as signs that he is the Messiah, the Lord's anointed.

Even John the Baptist, this outstanding herald of faith, wavered as his faith was tested. Nevertheless, Jesus held him up as the greatest man ever born while in the very next breath asserting that even the very least in Jesus' kingdom is greater than this giant of faith. Clinging to Jesus through the ups and downs of life, the times of challenge and testing, the periods of darkness and near despair, is what makes even the least in the kingdom great. Faith we learn, it what most pleases God: faith in his Son Jesus.

During this holy season of Advent, we turn to the great witnesses of faith: to St. John the Baptist, to Abraham, our father in faith, who believed against hope, to Mary our Mother who often walked her pilgrimage in the light of faith, and many others.

'Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus!'

Dear Friends in Christ:



REQUIEM MASS FOR BISHOP THOMAS McMAHON RIP: The funeral arrangements for Bishop Thomas McMahon RIP are as follows:

Sunday, 14th December Bishop Thomas' body will be taken to Stock Catholic Church, where he had been Parish Priest for fifty-six years. Bishop Alan will celebrate Mass at **4.00pm** with the People of Stock as they bid a fond farewell to their Pastor and Bishop. On

Monday, 15th December Bishop Thomas' body will be transferred to the Cathedral and received solemnly at **5.00pm**. Vespers for the deceased will be sung by the choir and all present. This is open to anyone who wishes to attend. Please note that there will not be a Holy Hour on Monday, 15th December

THE REQUIEM MASS for Bishop Thomas will be celebrated by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster & Metropolitan, on **Tuesday, 16th December at 11.30pm**. Accompanied by Bishop Alan & various Bishops of England & Wales; Priests, Deacons & Religious of the Diocese, Ecumenical Guests & Dignitaries, and representatives from all the various

parishes in the Diocese of Brentwood where Bishop Thomas served as a priest and Bishop for 66 years (Bishop for 34 years). The interment will take place in the Parish Cemetery immediately following the Mass.

LIVE STREAMING THE REQUIEM MASS: Many requests have been made to livestream the Requiem Mass. My thanks to Shea Lolin for setting this up for us: <https://www.shealolin.co.uk/bishop-thomas> Please also consult parish website. There is also the attached QR Code for quick access.

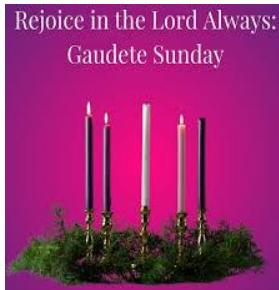


PARISH CAR PARK DURING THE FUNERAL: Notice to all parishioners of the Cathedral Parish, there will be little or no parking available on the day of the funeral as there will be Bishops, family and friends of Bishop Thomas attending. Please ensure you give yourself plenty of time for alternative parking. There are various local public car parks.

A VERY BIG THANK YOU! **A VERY BIG THANK YOU:** To the whole parish community for the incredible response to our Parish Bazaar once again this year. So many people were involved with the Bazaar, and it ran like clockwork. This is when a parish truly comes together and is united. It was lovely to see so many of our parishioners who came and supported all our efforts. I will not single out any individual, but my thanks to the Bazaar Committee, and all the stall holders who worked so hard on the day. The final total raised was £10,300, which is incredible, THANK YOU!

OUTSTANDING GRAND DRAW PRIZES TO BE COLLECTED: If you were a winner of one of the Grand Draw Prizes at the Bazaar, you should have been contacted by now, your prize is available for collection from Clergy House.

TODAY IS GAUDETE SUNDAY: and marks the mid-way point of our Holy Advent Season. The word 'Gaudete' means to 'Rejoice', and we 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!





ADVENT PARISH PENITENTIAL SERVICE:
Thursday, 18th December at 7.30pm (please note amended date). In preparation for Christmas, it is customary for all Roman Catholics to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. There will be several priests available to celebrate the Sacrament of

Reconciliation. I strongly urge all Catholic parishioners to avail themselves of the Sacrament before Christmas.

NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS SERVICE will take place in the Cathedral on **Sunday, 21st December at 4.00 p.m.** A celebration of prayers, readings and carols presided by Bishop Alan Williams. With music by the Brentwood Cathedral Choir. Please do join us for this very special celebration.



FLOWERS FOR CHRISTMAS: At present there are no flowers in the Cathedral during Advent, but we always like to make a big show for Christmas. There will be a voluntary retiring collection after all Masses this weekend for Christmas flowers. Also, if any family would like to purchase a Poinsettia in memory of deceased loved ones, these will be placed to adorn the crib, please drop them off from the 4th Sunday of Advent onwards **21st December.** Any flower donations can also be Gift Aided, kindly ensure that you use your GA number when donating.

If anyone would be available to help the flower ladies decorate The Cathedral from **10.30am on Christmas Eve**, please contact Roisin Cassels in advance on 07845 120 310.

TIMES OF MASSES FOR CHRISTMAS:

Just to inform the whole parish community the times of Masses over Christmas:

On Christmas Eve Wednesday, 24th December there will be a 5.00pm Mass for families, 7.00pm, 9.30 Carols followed by 10.00pm (Christmas Midnight Mass) Bishop Alan will preside.



Christmas Day: 8.00am, 9.30am Family Mass, 11.30am Solemn Sung Mass celebrated by Bishop Alan Williams. **NO EVENING MASS.**

St Stephen's Day Mass: Celebrated at 11.00am with enrolment of new Altar Servers. All Altar Servers are invited to be present at this Mass.

NEW YEAR'S DAY: Thursday, 1st January 2026 - Feast of Mary the Mother of God. Holy Mass will be celebrated at 11.00am. A fitting way for all to ask God's blessing, and the intercession of Our Blessed Lady on the New Year ahead.



YOUR CHRISTMAS OFFERING: This year, as always, envelopes will be available to make your Christmas Offering. This is an opportunity for every parishioner to make a Christmas gift to Fr John & Fr Matúš, which forms a major part of their annual salary. If you Gift Aid, please

ensure that you use your Parish GA envelopes. There is also the Gifting Machine in the Narthex (just tap) if you so wish, and the Gifting codes are on the Cathedral notice board. This year your Christmas Offering can also be made electronically. You just need to transfer your offering to the parish account with the reference 'Xmas Offering' plus your Gift Aid number.

The details of the bank account are:

Sort Code: 40-13-22

Account Number: 30217492

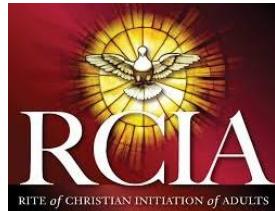
Account Name: Brentwood Cathedral

VISITING SEMINARIANS FOR CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS: There will be four Seminarians from the Pontifical North American College in Rome, who will be visiting us over the Christmas holidays. Arriving ***Monday, 22nd December***. For the past 20 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 host them. I will cook & 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. **THANK YOU!**



PARISH OFFICE - will be closed from ***Monday, 29th December to Thursday, 1st January***, re-opening on ***Friday, 2 January 2026***.

JOURNEY OF FAITH PROGRAMME - RCIA: Will take a break for the Christmas holidays and resume once again on **Thursday, 8th January at 7.00pm** at Clergy House. Please pray for our 12 enquirers, who will be making decisions over the Christmas period about being received into the Catholic Church through the Easter Sacraments. If you know of anyone who may be interested in learning more about the Roman Catholic faith, please contact Fr. John at Clergy House Tel No: 01277 265235.



BRENTWOOD FOODBANK - A big note of thanks for all your donations to the Brentwood Foodbank on the weekend of **29th/30th November**. As well as provisions, we raised £1,039, so thank you for your generosity.

FRIDAY FRIENDSHIP LUNCHES have finished for this year, but will be back providing soup on Friday, 9th January. If any parishioners would like to help on Fridays, please give your names in to the parish office.

COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS will be hosted by CAFOD. Next week will be the turn of PACE and they will be doing a 'Gran Chocolatada", hot chocolate and panettone for the children and mince pies for the adults. All proceeds will go to CAFOD. Please do join us.

May God bless you all.

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.

THE HOLY HOUR No Holy Hour on Monday, 15th December.

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.

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, Suzie 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 Floredo, Angela Gavin, Julian Goode, Brian Hodgkins, 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, Liam O'Herlihy, Steven Poole, Margaret Ross, Geraldine Sheehan, Robin Shenton, David Spring, Mary Stretch, Tim, TCT, Siobhan Vaughan, Michael Wilson, Kalcho Yankov and all our sick.

CAR PARK We are fortunate to have a reasonably sized car park for our parishioners to use during Mass times, however it can become very full, very quickly. We would like to ask that if you are able to park elsewhere and walk, you might consider leaving the spaces within the car park for those who need them the most. Also, the Council Car Park at Brentwood Town Hall is free on Sundays.

CHURCHES TOGETHER BRENTWOOD CAROLS

- On *Saturday, 20th December* there will an open-air Carol Service at the Chapel ruins from **11.00 - 13.00hrs**. This was a very popular and successful event last year with many passers by stopping and joining in.
- On *Tuesday, 23rd December* there will be the annual “Carols at the Swan” public house on Brentwood High St. from **19.30 onwards**.

DATES for 2026

- **ST. HELEN'S INFANT SCHOOL PROSPECTIVE NURSERY PARENTS 2026 -2027 (3 - 4 YEAR OLDS)** - There will be tours of the school for prospective parents (Nursery 2026) on ***Wednesday, 28th and Thursday, 29th January at 9.30am.*** Please contact the school office to book a slot: admin@st-helens-inf.essex.sch.uk or 01277 215 626.
- **Maranatha!** Come Lord Jesus! You are warmly welcomed to an evening of praise and worship, including mass and adoration. ***Friday, 16th January and Friday, 13th of February 2026*** from ***7:00pm to 9:00pm*** at The Blessed Sacrament Church, 116 Melbourne Avenue, CM12DU, Chelmsford. Bring your friends!
- **LOURDES WITH OUR DIOCESE:** Join Bishop Alan and pilgrims from across our diocese in Lourdes next summer: ***Friday 17th - Friday 24th July 2026***. Booking details will be available in the new year.
- **PILGRIMAGE TO KNOCK SHRINE & CO MAYO** - Led by Bishop Alan. ***Monday, 15th June 2026.*** £799.00 pps. Price includes flight from London Stansted, 10kg hold luggage, 4 nights' in Knock House Hotel with Dinner, Bed & Breakfast. All entertainment, excursions and transport included. Visit Knock Shrine, Ballintubber Abbey, Fr. Peyton Centre & Kylemore Abbey. Single supplement on Enquiry. Contact 01268 762 278 or 07740 175557 or email knockpilgrimages@gmail.com.

VACANCIES:-

ST. PETER'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, BILLERICAY - ADMIN. ASST.

For more information about the position and to apply, please visit:-

<https://www.essexschoolsjobs.co.uk/Vacancies/Details.aspx?VacancyId=115226>

Closing date is ***Midday on Monday, 5th January 2026.***

Visits to the school are welcomed and can be arranged by contacting the school office by phone 01277 653770 or email on admin@st-peters-pri.essex.sch.uk

ST. PETER'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, ROMFORD - HEADTEACHER

Deadline for applications: ***12.00 Noon on Tuesday, 6th January 2025***

ST. MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, HORNCHURCH - HEADTEACHER

Enquiries by email to admin@stmcps.co.uk, or phone 01708 448430.

Deadline for applications: **17:00 on Friday, 9 January 2026**

ST. HELEN'S CATHOLIC INFANT SCHOOL - KITCHEN ASSISTANT

11am - 2pm (term-time only) from January 2026. Please contact the school office for further information and an application pack: office@st-helens-inf.essex.sch.uk Deadline: **Friday, 16th January 2026**

HOLY FAMILY PRIMARY SCHOOL - BENFLEET - HEADTEACHER

Deadline for applications: **09:00, Wednesday, 28th January 2026**

EDUCATION SUPPORT ADMINISTRATOR - CATHEDRAL HOUSE

A vacancy has arisen to provide administrative and general departmental support to School Advisors across the Education Department of the Diocese. The post will be part-time - 22 hours per week - 4 days per week working from 9.00am - 3.00pm with half an hour for lunch. Term time only. Salary £14.50 per hour

The closing date for applications is **5.00pm on Monday, 16 February 2026**. If you have any queries or if you would like to apply, please send your CV by email to hr@brcdt.org

WALSINGHAM HOUSE TEAM 26/27 - Applications are now open for the Walsingham House Team 26/27. Being on the team is a wonderful opportunity to work with young people from across the diocese, live in community and to share and deepen our faith. Applications are open to those aged 18-23 (current Year 13 and above).

For more information including the application form please see the website <https://bcys.net/whabbotswick/be-on-team/> or email michaelkearns@brcdt.org. Applications close on **Friday, 16th January 2026**.

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:

COMPLETE THE FORM ONLINE



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.

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
			

Brentwood Diocesan Trust – Registered Charity No. 234092