

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

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

Sunday, 21 December 2025

Spiritual Reflection:

Jesus' birth occurred against a backdrop of scandal and disappointment. As we immerse ourselves in the mystery and drama of Jesus' birth, we touch the crushing disappointment Joseph endured on learning that his beloved Mary was pregnant. As a devout Jew he knew that the marriage could not proceed, and that the law, if rigidly applied, would result in punishment and judgement for his fiancé. Joseph's anguish threatened to crush and break him. He was a righteous man, zealous in keeping God's law, and must have felt shame and embarrassment. His prerogative under the Jewish law was either to insist on the letter of the law or to divorce Mary quietly, which meant signing legal papers to dissolve the union.



Into this seemingly all-too-human tragedy and scandal broke the illuminating light of God through the agency of a dream. In the dream an angel spoke to Joseph, informing him that Mary's pregnancy was the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the son she bore was to be named Jesus. Scandal, shame and tragedy gave way to light, truth, dignity and salvation. This is God's way. He makes the crooked straight, redeems the seemingly lost desperate situation, and replaces the anguish of scandal with dignity and joy. Amid every human tragedy and scandal, we learn that Jesus is with us because Jesus is Emmanuel, which means, 'God with us'.

At the dawn of history God's plan of Salvation began with a couple, Adam and Eve, and at the heart of God's emerging plan of salvation we also find a couple, Joseph and Mary. This teaches us that the family is sacred ground. Intended as a safe place where we can work out our salvation. Here we learn that God is with us. We learn that no scandal, drama, disappointment, hurt or upset, no tragedy, disgrace, indignity or outrage is beyond the healing mercy and forgiveness of God.

Today we rejoice in Mary and Joseph's witness - especially their obedience and responsiveness to God's will. Mary's 'yes' to God began our salvation and Joseph's acceptance of God's plan ensured the safety and protection of mother and child.

THANK YOU: I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere and grateful thanks to all who were involved with Bishop Thomas McMahon's Requiem Mass last Tuesday. So many people attended the funeral mass, presided over by His Eminence Cardinal Nichols. There were 12 Bishops and over 100 priests, plus family and friends and representatives from throughout the whole Diocese. Also, many parishioners attended. I thank our ushers who did a wonderful job co-ordinating the seating of all our guests, our team of Altar Servers, and Fr Gary Dench our Diocesan MC. Miss Marianne O'Sullivan, who had been Bishop Thomas' Secretary and worked tirelessly in the background; as did Janet Steele & Marie Browne, Bishop Alan's Secretaries. A big thanks you to the Cathedral House Staff, who pulled out all the stops in preparing the small hall for Bishop Thomas' family and personal guests. Also, thanks to Shea Lolin and his team for livestreaming the Requiem Mass, over 1200 people viewed the Mass, from various countries throughout the world. The Requiem Mass can still be viewed online if you go to the Parish Website. May Bishop Thomas Rest in Peace & Rise in Glory. AMEN .

Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,

Christmas 2025

This Thursday, Christmas Day we celebrate the Birthday of Our Lord once again into our lives. 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.

I would like to extend a special welcome to all our visitors over the Christmas holiday, and to 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; for our Nine Lessons & Carols, we are so lucky to have such a wonderful music tradition, musicians, and choir director on a weekly basis.



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.

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 goodies 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!

HODIE CHRISTUS NATUS EST

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



Felicem Natalem Christi, Feliz Navidad, Buon Natale, Joyeux Noel, Felis Natal, God jul, Wesołych Świąt, Crăciun fericit, Frohe Weihnachten, Vrolijk Kerstfeest, Linksmų Kalėdų, nollag Shona, Maligayang Pasko, Vowelhood Rizdva. С Рождеством, Priecīgus Ziemassvētkus,



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.

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

TIMES OF MASSES FOR CHRISTMAS:

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

On Christmas Eve 24th December

there will be a 5.00pm Mass for families, 7.00pm, 9.30 Carols, 10.00pm (Christmas Midnight Mass) Bishop Alan will preside. Christmas Day: 8.00am, 9.30am Family Mass, 11.30am Solem 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: 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 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.

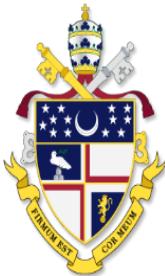


The details of the bank account are:

Sort Code: 40-13-22

Account Number: 30217492

Account Name: Brentwood Cathedral



A VERY WARM WELCOME: To three seminarians from the Pontifical North American College who will be arriving on Monday and will be with us for Christmas. Another Seminarian will arrive on the 27th December for a few days. 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. Thanking you all for your kindness and generosity while the students are here.

ST STEPHEN'S DAY - ALTAR SERVERS MASS:

Friday 26th December at 11.00am, this is an invitation to all our Altar Servers and their families, also the parish community to join us for the very special Mass, where new Altar Servers will be enrolled into the Guild of St Stephen, the Patron Saint of Altar Servers. It's always a very beautiful Mass. If there are any other boys or girls who would like to become Altar Servers, please speak to one of the priests or with Thomas Bridge, who is our Master of Ceremonies. It's always a great honour to be able to Serve at Holy Mass. You will be given training by Thomas.



CAFOD - Thank you to everyone that supported our CAFOD Water Pumps project appeal. We launched this project shortly after Pope Francis died, as our Parish's way of following his thoughts and actions - helping to make a difference to our brothers and sisters who are struggling in this troubled world. Thank you again and Happy Christmas to you all.

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

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 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. Next week will be the turn of The Brownies. 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 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.**

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 Florendo, 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.

CHURCHES TOGETHER BRENTWOOD CAROLS

- 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

- **CANON PALMER CATHOLIC SCHOOL ALUMNI** - Calling all Canon Palmer Catholic School Alumni to come to our 65th Anniversary on Friday 9th January 2026 at 2pm. Visit our website at [www\(tpc.academy](http://www(tpc.academy)) for further details and to register an interest for future events.
- **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 PRIMARY SCHOOL, ROMFORD - HEADTEACHER

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

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. 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***

THE BISHOPS' CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND CATHOLIC SCHOOL, CHELMSFORD - HEADTEACHER

Deadline: ***12.00 Noon, 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 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 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***.

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