

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

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

Sunday, 7 December 2025

Spiritual Reflection:

Once again, the phrase 'the kingdom of heaven' features in our reading. If we are to understand this phrase as a sort of shorthand summary standing for 'the place where the Father's will is being done', then our reading today can be seen to continue teaching us the steps of the journey of placing ourselves under the Father's will.



John the Baptist's message was a call to repentance: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' It is as if he was saying: 'We are on the very edge of really letting ourselves live under the Father's will. But there is a big obstacle. We need to repent!' When it comes to doing the Father's will. There is a huge obstacle - we have discussed this already when we looked at the house built on sand. The big obstacle is the power of our own self-will. But the text tells us that the people came to John to be baptised in the River Jordan, and that they were confessing their sins!

Is there a difference between the sins and self-will? Look at what John said to the Sadducees and Pharisees. He accused them of being a brood of vipers. Strong stuff! What made him use such a bitter metaphor? The image is gruesome - we cringe at images of writhing, hissing snakes.



Surely, it is not much to do with the failings and weakness we usually think of as sins. There is something more powerful at work, and we can overlook it. We may overlook it, but daily we experience it. As soon as anything in our day comes up against our self-will, the reaction is immediate. And it

turns us in an instant from being a happy, peaceful, kindly human being into a seething ball of reaction and anger. We are only conscious of our self-will and its power when something or someone challenges or comes up against us. Reflect for a moment on those incidences that happen in a car, or in the supermarket, or in any situation where we get upset. What is really happening? It is not that my self-will is being exposed. Suddenly, the veneer of my kindly façade is torn down and the viper is revealed. Strong stuff indeed!

Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,

I sit writing this editorial in anticipation of our annual Parish Bazaar. I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has helped over the past months to prepare for the Bazaar. As you can appreciate a lot of hard work goes into the preparation of such an event. It is a real family occasion for everyone. A personal thank you to the Bazaar Committee who have been working behind the



scenes for the past few months. Thank you to all of our Parishioners who have donated gifts and items for all the various stalls, your generosity is amazing. I had no doubt that you would come up trumps where bottles were donated, we reached our three hundred mark! The bottle stall at a Bazaar is always a great crowd pleaser. Thank you for all the toiletries donated; toys and cuddly toys; bric-a-brac. Thank you to the Mercy Sisters who for the first time had a knitted goods stall, so grateful you could join us. Thank you to all those who baked Christmas Cakes & other cakes and pies.

A big thank you, to those who donated Grand Draw Prizes, and those who donated money for the Bazaar. Obviously, the Grand Draw with Raffle

Tickets are always a great appeal, thanks you for selling your books of tickets. Thank you to those who helped set up on Friday, and all those who helped to clear up afterwards. I pray that everyone enjoyed the Bazaar!

GRAND DRAW PRIZES: Can be collected from Clergy House throughout the coming week.

MATCHED GIVING: COULD WE MAKE A SPECIAL APPEAL FOR MATCHED GIVING? It's still not too late for help with Matched Giving from your Firm or Bank? Many companies do employ a Matched Giving facility; all you need to do is ask your place of employment; this truly would be of great benefit to us. If you work at the bazaar on a particular stall, whatever is raised is often matched by the company or bank. Please investigate it!



REQUIEM MASS FOR BISHOP THOMAS McMAHON RIP:

The funeral arrangements for Bishop Thomas McMahon RIP are now finally in place. On **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.

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; Ecumenical Guests & Dignitaries, 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>
There is also the attached QR Code for access.





ADVENT PARISH PENITENTIAL SERVICE:

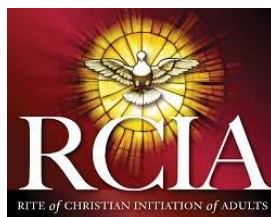
Monday, 15th December at 7.30pm. In preparation for Christmas, it is customary for all Roman Catholics to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Bishop Thomas McMahon's Body will have been received into

the Cathedral at 5.00pm with Sung Vespers. 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.

JOURNEY OF FAITH PROGRAMME - RCIA:

Continues next ***Thursday, 11th December.*** Please keep all our enquirers in your thoughts and prayers as they continue in their faith journey. Theme: The Sacrament of Reconciliation. 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.



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: ***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.

PARISH CEMETERY: I would be sincerely grateful, in advance of Bishop Thomas's funeral for some help in clearing the final vestiges of leaves from the Parish Cemetery. If you can give some time during the period leading up to the 16th of December it would be very helpful. The cortège will leave the Cathedral after the Requiem Mass and the coffin will be carried through the front small car park to the Cemetery for the burial rites. Thanking you in advance. We want the Cathedral site to look pristine for all the visitors and mourners for the funeral.



REPLACING CATHEDRAL LIGHT BULBS: You may have noticed that a considerable number of bulbs in the Cathedral Chandeliers are spent! On ***Wednesday, 10th December***, a company will be erecting a tower to replace the spent light bulbs in the Cathedral. Please be very careful if you're coming into the Cathedral on that day to avoid the electricians.

COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS will be hosted by the Love in Action Group and next week will be the turn of CAFOD. Please do join us.

MISSIO If you have not yet returned your Missio box, could you please do so, urgently, either to the narthex or Clergy House. Thank you.

DIOCESAN DIRECTORY 2025 Copies of this are available for purchase from the narthex - ***£3.20 each***. Please place money in the wall safe marked "Publications / Booklets". Many thanks.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS - Would anyone be available to help the flower ladies decorate The Cathedral on Christmas Eve? We start at ***10.30am***. If you are able to assist, please contact Roisin Cassels in advance on 07845 120 310, so she knows how many helpers to expect. Don't forget, the crib and tree also need to be decorated! There will be a second collection for Christmas Flowers on the weekend of 13th/14th December. Thank you.

May God bless you all.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Fr John', with a horizontal line underneath.

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

CAMPION SCHOOL SENIOR CITIZENS PARTY - Sunday, 14th December, 2025 between 12.30 pm and 5.00 pm, with lunch served at 1.30pm.

As this is such a popular event, tickets are limited to 15 per parish, so if you are interested in attending, please let Theresa in the Parish Office know by **12.00 Noon on Monday, 8 December**, as final numbers need to be confirmed to Campion by the end of that day.

CHURCHES TOGETHER BRENTWOOD CAROLS

- On **Saturday, 20th December** there will be 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

- **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:-

URSULINE PREPARATORY SCHOOL - EYFS TEACHING ASSISTANT

The Ursuline Preparatory School based in Warley, Brentwood seeking to appoint an EYFS experienced Teacher Assistant at our thriving Prep. School from January.

The successful candidate for the full-time EYFS Teacher Assistant position will be expected to support the teacher and children within the class.

Salary offered will be dependent on knowledge and experience. Please apply in writing with accompanying CV to Mrs. Wilson, Headteacher by post to Ursuline Preparatory School, Great Ropers Lane, Warley, Brentwood, CM13 3JW or via e-mail: secretary@ursulineprepwarley.co.uk

Closing date for application is ***Friday, 12th December 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. 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@stmcpes.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:



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.

GENERAL NEWS

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. 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.

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