

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

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**FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF  
JESUS, MARY & JOSEPH (A)  
&  
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY**

**Sunday, 28 December 2025  
&  
Sunday, 4 January 2026**

**Spiritual Reflection:**

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The opening sentence of Leo Tolstoy's masterpiece Anna Karenina is a striking one: 'Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.' We can be sure that the Holy Family was a happy family, but like all happy families their happiness was forged through trial and suffering and the ups and



downs of domestic daily living. Today we cross the threshold into the tranquillity and holiness of Holy Family. Here we find the hearth at which Jesus lived his hidden years. Here we find the first domestic Church, a loving family devoted to God and to each other.

The Scriptures only speak of the birth of Jesus, the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt and the discovery of Jesus in the Temple. To learn more, we seek the wisdom and guidance of the Spirit. The Spirit leads us to understand that because the triune God is a communion of love, the family is its living reflection. St. Pope John Paul II said: 'Our God in his deepest mystery is not solitude, but a family, for he has within himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love. That love, in the divine family is the Holy Spirit.' The family is, then, a school of prayer, a school of service, a school of discipline, a school of formation, but most of all a school of love.

We thank God the Father for the Holy Family's witness of love, we rejoice in the Son for the healing grace of salvation, and we give praise to the Holy Spirit whose love is poured out upon us so we can love and serve God in our families. The importance of the family has been the bulwark of Christian teaching since the beginning. It is the womb from which vocations are born, be that to the married or priestly or religious life. Jesus spent his hidden years deeply rooted in the day-to-day life of his family in Nazareth - here he learnt to love, serve and pray. Thank God for the family you were born into; each family member is a blessing and grace from God.

My Dear Friends in Christ,

As we rapidly approach the end of this year 2025, and the end of this Holy Year of Hope, I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the whole parish community for your ongoing support of our Cathedral Parish. It has been a wonderful year, and there have been many graces and blessings bestowed on all of us. As we look forward to a New Year 2026, let us ask God's blessings on our families and our parish,

**A BIG THANK YOU:** Fr John & Fr Matúš would like to thank the whole parish community for your kindness and generosity over this Christmas Season, for the many cards and gifts, and your Christmas Offertory. We truly appreciate your thoughtfulness.



Also, a big thank you to those who have provided sweets and desserts and goodies for our Seminarians from the Pontifical North American College. They have really enjoyed the variety of sweet things.

Fr John & Fr. Matúš would like to wish you and all your families a very Happy, Holy, Healthy & Prosperous New Year for 2026.

I would like to thank our Music Director Mr Andrew Wright and the whole music department for the most incredible music that was celebrated over all the Christmas Masses. Also, for the wonderful Nine Lessons and Carols celebrated on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December. The retiring collection at this service will go towards the Brentwood Cathedral Music Department for the promotion and encouragement of young musicians to perform at the Cathedral. We are so lucky and fortunate to have such a wonderful music tradition here at the Cathedral. I'm sure we're the envy of many cathedrals throughout the country.

There has been so much help given over the past few weeks in preparation for Christmas at the Cathedral; it's really what makes the Parish tick over daily. Thank you to everyone who helped: Choir, MC & Altar Servers, those who look after the altar linen, clean the brass, all our Ushers & Greeters at Mass, those ladies who did the flowers so beautifully for Christmas.

**AS A NEW YEARS BEGINS:** Let us ask God's Blessings on our families, and on our Parish Family. A New Year is always an opportunity to make resolutions to get closer to the Lord through our faith. If for any reasons anyone has fallen by the wayside in the practice of faith, it is an incredible opportunity to renew our faith, to strengthen the bond between ourselves and the Lord Jesus. Without faith, we are nothing! Our faith gives us a strong purpose along the journey of life. It teaches us that we are not solely self-sufficient, and there is a holy dependence on God and His Son Jesus Christ; there is something much greater than ourselves at work all the time in our lives.



**CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS:** It's still not too late to make your Christmas Offering to the Parish Clergy, which forms the major part of their income and salary throughout the year. Please use your Gift Aid envelopes, or if you wish to give electronically, please transfer money to the Parish Account with Reference 'Christmas Offering' and your Gift Aid Number please: The details of the Bank Account are Account name: Brentwood Cathedral, Sort Code 40-13-22 Account Number: 30217492 There is also the Electronic Gifting Machine in the Narthex of the Cathedral, which you can use your credit or debit card to tap (just use the heading Christmas Offering). With grateful thanks!

**THIS PARISH NEWSLETTER:** Will be for two weeks, this weekend the Feast of the Holy Family (27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> December 2025), & the Second Sunday after the Nativity (3<sup>rd</sup>/ 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026). The next published Newsletter will be on the weekend of the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> January 2026. **PLEASE NOTE:** The Parish Office will be closed until ***Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2026***

**THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY** is on ***Tuesday, 6th January*** and is a Holy Day of Obligation. Cathedral Mass times will be ***9.15am, 1.10pm*** (presided over by Bishop Alan) and ***7.30pm***.

**RCIA PROGRAMME - JOURNEY OF FAITH:** Will resume on ***Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026***. Please do keep our twelve enquirers in your thoughts and prayers, especially as they make the very important decision to be received into full communion with the Roman Catholic faith at Easter 2026. Theme: Marriage & Holy Orders.

**FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PROGRAMME:** The Parents' & Children's Meeting will be on ***Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January*** commencing with 9.15am Mass for all. Fr John will talk to the Parents after the Mass and the children will disperse into the various groups for the first session. The children's session will end at 11.30am. Please ensure that you personally pick up your child when the session is ended. Thank you! Please keep all of the children and their families in your prayers over the next several months.

**COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS** will be hosted by the Brownies and next week will be the turn of St. Helen's Ladies Group. Please do join us.

May God bless you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr John", is positioned at the bottom right of the page.

**CHARISMATIC PRAYER GROUP** resumes on *Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> January* from **7.00pm - 8.30pm**. Everyone is welcome so please do feel free to join us for prayer and praise.

**MONTHLY YOUTH MASS** will be held on *Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> January*. 6.00pm in the Parish Hall, followed by Mass in The Cathedral at 7.30pm. All young people are very welcome.

**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.

**RETROUVAILLE MARRIAGE HELP** - Retrouvaille helps couples find hope and healing for their marriage. Next date: ***Thursday, 12 February***. [www.retrouvaille.org.uk](http://www.retrouvaille.org.uk) Tel: 07887 296983

### **DATES for 2026**

- **CANON PALMER CATHOLIC SCHOOL ALUMNI** - Calling all Canon Palmer Catholic School Alumni to come to our 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on ***Friday 9<sup>th</sup> 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, 28<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> January 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 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 17<sup>th</sup> - Friday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2026***. Booking details will be available in the new year.

## VACANCIES:-

### **ST. PETER'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, ROMFORD - HEADTEACHER**

Deadline for applications: ***12.00 Noon on Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> 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, 5<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:admin@st-peters-pri.essex.sch.uk)

### **ST. MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, HORNCHURCH - HEADTEACHER**

Enquiries by email to [admin@stmcps.co.uk](mailto: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](mailto:office@st-helens-inf.essex.sch.uk) Deadline: ***Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2026***

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

Deadline: ***12.00 Noon, Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2026***

### **HOLY FAMILY PRIMARY SCHOOL - BENFLEET - HEADTEACHER**

Deadline for applications: ***09:00, Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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/whabbotwick/be-on-team/> or email [michaelkearns@brcdt.org](mailto:michaelkearns@brcdt.org). Applications close on *Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> 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:

*giftaidit*

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