

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

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FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (A)

Sunday, 22 February 2026

Spiritual Reflection:

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert for forty days to be tempted and tested. During Lent we too are led by the spirit into the mystery of Jesus' sojourn in the desert. 'By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert (CCC540). Lent, then, is a journey into the desert. We too, during this holy season, can expect to be tempted and tested.

The name Satan means 'adversary'. In the book of Job, we are given a vivid picture of Satan in God's heavenly court, along with all the other angels, where he has the role of accuser or prosecutor. The Scriptures identify Satan as the serpent in the Garden of Eden who tempted Adam and Eve and, therefore, as the origin of sin and temptation. What the Scriptures and tradition make known is that humankind has a mortal enemy who, although a finite being created by God, is in a desperate struggle to overthrow God's reign, usurp his Lordship and lead his creation into darkness and death. On Easter Sunday each of us will recite our baptismal promises and in doing so renew them. Bear this in mind as we



move through Lent because, as you will be aware, a renewal of our baptismal promises involves us actively, freely and voluntarily rejecting Satan.



Lent is also a time for us to discover anew and afresh the gospel, the Good News which Jesus began to proclaim immediately after his time of testing. What is the Good News? The Good News is a message in two parts; the first part is to repent, and the second part is to believe in the gospel. We walk together on this road marked out for us by the church and take up our call to stand firm and resist the devil, knowing that he will flee, and embracing freely and with love the gospel, which is Christ with us and in us, the hope of salvation.

‘In these days, therefore, let us add something beyond the wonted measure of our service, such as private prayers and abstinence in food and drink. Let each one, over and above the measure prescribed for him; offer God something of our own free will in the joy of the Holy Spirit. (St. Benedict)

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Dear Friends in Jesus Christ:

As we have entered this Holy Lenten Season, let us embrace the disciplines of Lent - Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. The personal decisions we make during this special period are important. It is a Penitential Season, meaning that we are examining our lives in every aspect to see where improvements can take place. We are encouraged to celebrate the



Sacrament of Reconciliation throughout Lent. With regards to personal prayer; there are many things that we can do; - remember to pray our morning and evening prayers, read a chapter of the bible each day, attend an additional mass once a week (see Lenten Mass schedule), attend the Stations of the Cross on Fridays or Sundays or Holy Hour & Exposition on Wednesdays. With regards to Fasting - this weekend we will receive our CAFOD envelopes; next Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> February is CAFOD Family Fast Day; what we save in our fasting we place in our envelopes and give to CAFOD. You may like to donate to the Food Bank - once again our boxes will be present in the Narthex during Lent for your offerings. Donations can also be made via the QR code or the CAFOD website. Thank you.

We have so many opportunities to do good in this life; one act of human kindness can change a person's life. One kind word can transform a person's day. Perhaps during this Holy Season, we can practice one act of human kindness every day. You will be amazed at the difference it will make to you and to others. And as the Gospel told us on Ash Wednesday: 'The Lord who sees all that is done in secret will reward you...!'



**SERIES OF LENTEN LECTURES:** As we have mentioned this Holy Lenten Season, please consider joining us for the Cathedral Lenten Lectures commencing next Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> February when Abbot Hugh Allan will initiate this series of talks. The theme of the talks this year is: "What does it truly mean to be Catholic"

**Talk 1: Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February** - Abbot Hugh Allan, O Praem. "I Believe..." Living and Proclaiming the Catholic Faith.

**Talk 2: Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March** - Rev Msgr Kevin W Hale, VG. Being Catholic and the call to holiness as seen in the lives of some recently canonised saints.

**Talk 3: Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March** - Mr Mauro Iannicelli. Prayer as the Foundation of our Catholic Life.

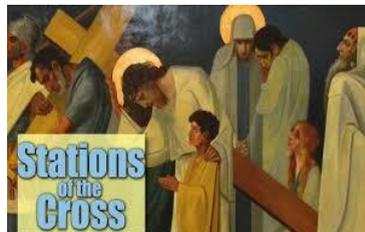
**Talk 4: Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March** - Rev Msgr John Armitage. The uniqueness of Catholicism for British Society.

All the Lenten Talks will take place in the Parish Hall, commencing at 7.30pm. Please do avail yourselves of the opportunity to hear these gifted speakers. What better way to truly enter the Holy Lenten Season!

### **TRADITIONAL DEVOTIONS FOR LENT -**

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS:** Will take place every *Friday Evening of Lent at 7.00pm, also on Sunday afternoon at 5.00pm.*

This Lenten Devotion retraces the last day of Jesus' life on Good Friday. Step by step we journey with the Lord as he makes his way to Calvary and His Crucifixion. This is a beautiful spiritual journey, that we are privileged to make with Our Blessed Lord. Because Jesus is making this sacrifice of his own life on behalf of the whole of sinful humanity. He truly becomes the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." If you have never prayed this devotion before, I really would encourage everyone to at least come on one occasion and join us for this devotion.





**THE RITE OF ELECTION:** This year there will be twelve Catechumens and Candidates for the Easter Sacraments. The Rite of Election will take place on the First Sunday of Lent **22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026 at 3.00pm**. This is when all the RCIA catechumens & candidates throughout the Diocese of Brentwood gather at the Cathedral and are formally accepted and presented to Bishop Alan. I would like to

commend all our catechumens and candidates to your prayers over the Lenten Season, as they continue in their final preparations for the reception of the Easter Sacraments. This is truly a great moment in their lives of faith, when they become one with us through faith and of course, receive Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist for the first time.

**NEW ENQUIRERS FOR SEPTEMBER 2026:** Each year we run the RCIA Journey of Faith Programme. If you know of anyone who may be interested in learning more about the Roman Catholic Faith, possibly with the view of receiving the Easter Sacraments, please contact Fr John at Clergy House Tel No: 01277 265235. Fr John will be only too happy to explain what is involved in the RCIA Programme and the commitment in faith that is involved.



**PARISH FINANCES:** First and foremost, I would like to thank all our parishioners who donate financially to the parish on a weekly basis; for those who Gift Aid and use the Envelope System; for those who use the Online banking system, and the Card Swipe & QR Code Systems. Your

weekly contribution is always gratefully received and goes towards the upkeep of this very large plant of the Cathedral, Parish Hall & Clergy House. As you will know from your own domestic situations, the utilities are a constant drain on weekly income, especially during the winter months. Thankfully, our Parish Christmas Bazaar this year, has helped to defray some of the costs. Unfortunately, the Clergy House Boiler broke down and was condemned by the heating engineer, which meant we had to invest in a new boiler. (It couldn't have come at a worse time, just over a month ago, when we were having minus 8-degree temperatures, it took ten days before a new boiler was up and running). I have also tried to keep the Cathedral as warm as possible during these winter months, but as you can appreciate, it's a huge space to heat, and takes a long time to warm up. I am including a breakdown of many of the regular payments that must be



made; and various other outgoings over the past six months, which gives you some idea of how your contributions are being spent regularly. I should point out that the largest outgoing bill each month is paid to the Diocese for the upkeep and running of Cathedral House and all the staff who work there. This is called the Diocesan Quota, and every parish must pay an amount monthly. All the Curial Departments, work to ensure the smooth running of the diocese and are at the service of all the parishes. As you can appreciate (and I'm always aware of your generosity already), every penny is accounted for, and with inflation affecting us all, your weekly contribution is vital in keeping everything functioning. If you belong to the Gift Aid Scheme, and perhaps, haven't increased your weekly offering in many years, would you kindly think about doing so. Also, if you don't already belong to the Gift Aid Scheme, would you seriously consider doing so; Gift Aid forms can be found in the Narthex of the Cathedral.

### **ITEMISED EXPENDITURE:**

**Monthly:** Diocesan Quota - £5,320.15; Clergy House & Cathedral Cleaning - £857.00; Hall Cleaning - £240.00; Garden Maintenance (Cathedral & Holy Cross) - £320.00; Website Maintenance - £215.00; Water Bill (6 months) Cathedral & Halls - £1,190.00, Electricity (Cathedral, Holy Cross, Clergy Hse & Halls) - £1,300.00; Gas (Cathedral, Holy Cross, Clergy Hse & Halls) - £2,724.00.

**Renewal of Annual Contracts:** Maintenance of Audio System - £440.00; Parish Hall Boiler Service - £310.00; Smoke Alarm Maintenance - £300.00; CCTV & Intruder Alarm Maintenance - £380.00; Brentwood Council Domestic Waste Contract - £499.00; Annual Photocopiers Maintenance Contract - £1,200.00

**Ad Hoc Payments:** Repair to Parish Hall Heating - £120.00; Stationery - Photocopying Paper £252.00; Tree Maintenance Holy Cross - £480.00; Toilet Unblockage Cathedral (3 callouts) £320.00; Replacement Pumps for Parish Halls Boiler - £864.00; Cathedral Roof Repairs - £894.00; Tree Pruning - Cemetery Front & Back (Dead & Poisoned Trees Removal) - £2,814.00.

**One Off Payments:** Cathedral Light Bulb Replacement - £2,500.00; New Boiler for Clergy House - £6,200.00

As you can see, there is and has been a heavy layout over the past several months. Please do keep these figures in mind when you make your weekly offering. Thank you. My grateful thanks to our Finance Committee, and our Gift Aid Organisers who do so much for the Parish.





## RCIA PROGRAMME - JOURNEY OF FAITH:

Continues this *Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2026.*

Theme: *The Church's Moral Teaching.* 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.

May God bless you all.

**REQUIESCAT IN PACE MARGARET MACLEAY:** Please pray for the repose of the soul of Margaret MacLeay, who was associated with the Music Department at Brentwood Cathedral for nearly 40 years.

Her Requiem Mass will take place in The Cathedral at **12.00 Noon on Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March**, followed by cremation at Bentley Crematorium at **1.30pm**. We extend our sincere condolences to Margaret's family on their sad loss.

**THE CAFOD LENTEN WALK:** You are invited to join the walk, which will take place every Sunday from **22<sup>nd</sup> February** until **29<sup>th</sup> March**. Led by a volunteer from Love in Action, the group will be guided round areas of Brentwood, at a leisurely pace, allowing the opportunity to meet more parish members (especially if you are new to the parish), but also to walk, talk and raise awareness of our neighbours in need of Life Saving Water.

We have been taking this walk for the past few years and would love more people to attend. We meet outside the Parish Hall after 9.30am Mass and each walk lasts approximately 1hr. Please do join us, even if you can only attend for one week and please come prepared with suitable clothing, in case of bad weather. Our parish is registered on the CAFOD website under 'Big Lent Walk'.

**VESPERS FOR UKRAINE:** There will be a special Vespers for Ukraine at **6.00pm on Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> February** to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the Russian invasion. There will be a mixture of familiar hymns, English and Ukrainian church music and it will be followed by refreshments and entertainment provided by the Ukrainian community in the Parish Hall. Everyone is welcome as we show our solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

**NOTICES FOR THE NEWSLETTER:** If anyone has any items they would like included in the weekly newsletter, please send the details to the Parish Office by Wednesday lunchtime.

**COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS TODAY:** will be hosted by the Scouts. Next week will be the turn of CAFOD and Love in Action. All are welcome, so please do join us.

**THE FRIDAY FRIENDSHIP LUNCH:** Every Friday all are welcome to come along to the parish hall (**12 noon - 2.00pm**) for a soup lunch, cakes and drinks and most importantly, friendly faces and an opportunity to meet up with others.

**MASS TIMES** in the Cathedral:

**SATURDAY VIGIL MASS** at 6.30pm

**SUNDAY:** 8.00am / 9.30am / 11.30am & 6.30pm

**WEEKDAY MASSES** Monday to Friday at 9.15am

**SATURDAY:** 9.15am

**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:** 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 details to the parish secretary.

**SICK & HOUSEBOUND PARISHIONERS:** If there are any sick or housebound parishioners that would like a visit from one of the priests please contact Clergy House Tel No: 01277 265 235. We can also arrange for Holy Communion to be brought to your homes on a regular basis.

**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 01277 265 235.

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION** is available in the Cathedral on Saturdays from 10.00 - 11.00am. Confessions in Italian are also offered.

**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.

**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, Margaret F, Rebecca Florendo, Angela Gavin, 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.

**PARISH CAFOD WATER APPEAL:** We are nearly there! £3,715 has been raised so far. To help us reach our target of £4,500, we would like to ask for your help. An idea has been put forward, to produce a recipe booklet, containing recipes that represent our Parish communities. So, if you have a favourite family recipe (savoury or sweet), please put it in an envelope and post it through the letterbox at Clergy House by **Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> March**. If we receive enough, we plan to have it printed in time to go on sale at Easter. If anyone has any contacts who could help with the printing, please let us know.

**LOURDES WITH OUR DIOCESE:** Would you like to join our bishop and parishioners and clergy from around the diocese on our annual pilgrimage to Lourdes this summer? The dates are **Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> - Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> July**. Please visit <https://tangney-tours.com/brentwood> for further information and to book, or contact Deirdre Pembroke, [lourdes@brcdt.org](mailto:lourdes@brcdt.org).

**PILGRIMAGE TO KNOCK SHRINE & CO MAYO:** Led by Bishop Alan. **Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2026**. £799.00 pps. Price includes flight from London Stansted, 10kg hold luggage, 4 nights' in Knock House Hotel (Dinner, Bed & Breakfast). Also, all entertainment, excursions and transport. 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](mailto:knockpilgrimages@gmail.com).

**ST HELEN'S CATHOLIC INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL: NURSERY APPLICATIONS 2026-27** The nursery admission round is now open for parents of children to apply for a nursery place for the academic year that starts in September 2026. The application form is available on the school website and applications must be made directly to the school. The closing date for applications is: **Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2026**.

**PROJECT 58.7 - FEEDING THE HOMELESS - LOCAL SUPPORT:** For almost 6 years a solid group of volunteers from Brentwood Cathedral and St Joseph's Hutton (and lately some from Billericay parish as well), have been providing food for the homeless. Our group of local volunteers help by cooking a main meal or pudding, or by supplying

fruit/yogurts or by delivering everything to a venue in Basildon. Volunteers are on the rota roughly once a month and according to your preferences and the days/dates you are available. The volunteer group are great at swapping and helping each other when unexpected things happen! We have a fund to help cover the cost of expenses. If you are interested to know more about what is involved, please contact Maddy on 07710 187293.

**SVP AND CAFOD WORK EXPERIENCE** - The St Vincent de Paul Society and CAFOD are working together to offer a week of free residential work experience for 20 young adults in England and Wales. The experience will run from ***Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> - Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> June*** in London. Candidates must be aged 18-25 years old, but priority will be given to those in their first or second year at university. Application forms are available via the QR code and the deadline is ***Monday, 6 April***. For any queries, please contact [KeziaH@svp.org.uk](mailto:KeziaH@svp.org.uk)



**VACANCY - HEAD TEACHER, ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, HORNCHURCH** The Governors of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Hornchurch, are seeking to appoint an inspirational and dedicated Head Teacher. Closing date: ***Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 5pm***. Interview Date: ***Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2026***. Enquiries can be made by email to [admin@stmcps.co.uk](mailto:admin@stmcps.co.uk), or phone 01708 448430.

**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 |
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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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