

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

Canon John J Harvey
Cathedral Dean

Father Matúš Meleg
Assistant Priest

Clergy House: 01277 265235

Deacon Paul Conrad: 01277 810321

Deacon Nicholas Holmes: 01277 373788

Deacon Joseph Manuel-Mokwenye:
deaconjosephmanuel-mokwenye@brcdt.org

Email: cathedral@brcdt.org

Website: www.brentwoodcathedral.org.uk

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (A)

Sunday, 26 April 2026

Spiritual Reflection:

Although we are very familiar with the homely and comforting image of Jesus the Good Shepherd, today's reading has a rather harder edge. It speaks not simply about the shepherd but also about the gate and the sheepfold, and about the sheep being led in and out of the sheepfold. This is much less easy to understand - not least, his words about people entering the sheepfold by another way than the gate being 'thieves and robbers'! What do you think that Jesus was talking about? Is there anything that we can draw upon to help us realise what was in Jesus' mind?



There are two things in particular. The first is the life and practice of shepherds at the time of Jesus, in fact, and even today in the Middle East. This author one day in the Holy Land witnessed a shepherd leading his sheep in a long line down a valley. And then later, about midday, he saw a shepherd sheltering from the heat of the sun under a tree with his sheep in a ring around him. A shepherd in the

Middle Easter has a much more intimate relationship with each of his sheep than we see in Western Countries - knowing them by name would not be unusual.

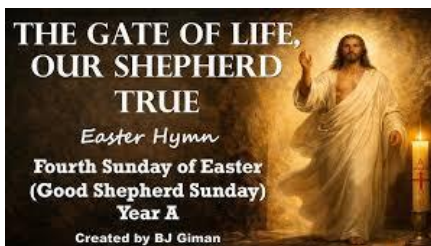
But this leads to the other aspects of Jesus' words: in the Old Testament, the shepherd was the classic image of the king of Israel - probably because David had been a shepherd boy. However, as the prophets, especially Ezekiel, make clear, many of Israel's kings were far from being shepherds to their people. On the contrary, they used the people to satisfy their own personal motives, often greed. In that sense, they robbed the people of what they could rightfully expect and fed off the people rather than leading them to good pasture! In Jesus' words they were 'thieves and robbers.' By implication, Jesus probably also had in mind the current Jewish leaders, including Herod, who had completely failed in their proper role.



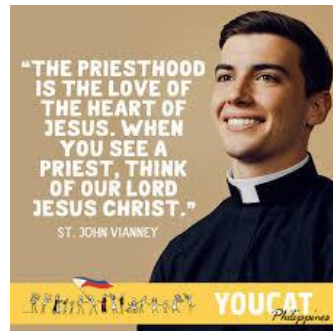
But the radical thing is that Jesus was claiming not only to be the true shepherd-king of Israel but also the gateway - the way into God's kingdom and place of feeding or pasture - as well as the source of life (the fullness of resurrection life) for his people.

Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday and is the World Day of Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life. Here in the Diocese of Brentwood, we have a Deacon Andrei Ilies, at present studying at the Beda College in Rome, who will be Ordained to the Sacred Priesthood on Saturday, 4th July, here at the Cathedral Parish. Also, Jonathan Burdon will be ordained a transitional Deacon for the Diocese on Saturday, 13th June at Westminster Cathedral along with his classmates. Please keep them in your prayers. Sadly, we have very few students for the priesthood. We really need to pray earnestly for more vocations to the priesthood here in our own Diocese. This must be a priority for the future of the Church. As you're probably aware the formation for Priests takes several years, so we will have some very lean years ahead of us. The age of the clergy is now very top heavy, which is going to affect all our parishes in the future.



The Lord Jesus said, “that the harvest is rich, but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest.” I have always believed that the harvest is rich, men and women need more encouragement and courage to pursue Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life. The world has changed dramatically in the past 50 years, gone are the days where young men were encouraged to pursue a vocation, hence the diminishing numbers presenting themselves. With constant prayer and asking the ‘Lord of the Harvest’, I’m positive our prayers will be heard. Sometimes, it even means taking a leap of faith. If God wants you, he will certainly make it known to you!



SECOND COLLECTION FOR PROMOTION OF VOCATIONS - There will be a second collection for Promotion of Vocations at all Masses this weekend.

PARISH GIFT AID SCHEME: As the new Tax Year recently began, this is always a good time to review your Weekly Offertory. It is very encouraging to see that so many parishioners belong to the Parish Gift Aid Scheme. In using the Gift Aid envelopes and your direct giving



online, it allows the parish to claim back 25 pence in the pound, Our Weekly Offertory is our way of expressing gratitude to Almighty God for everything we have: our health, our happiness, our food, a roof over our heads, our children, our employment. There is so much to be

thankful for! If you have already joined the Gift Aid Scheme and you give it by direct debit, if you are able to increase your weekly offertory, you will need to do this either through your online banking or at the bank itself. If you do not belong to the Gift Aid Scheme, but would like to join, there are details on the parish website and forms in the narthex. The Cathedral thanks you for your generosity throughout the year, it truly does reflect your pride and love of your faith here at the Cathedral. Thank you once again!

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS: As we have just completed this year’s RCIA programme. I am calling the whole parish once again to see if there are any parishioners who may be interested in learning more about the Roman Catholic faith, possibly with the view of receiving the Easter Sacraments next Easter 2027.



The RCIA is a programme of systematic instruction of all aspects of Catholicism. Examining the Sacred Scriptures - Old & New Testaments. Understanding the whole concept of God. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ - the Lord's Mission and Teachings. The Gift of the Holy Spirit - Pentecost. The Sacramental Life of the

Church - The 7 Sacraments (with special emphasis on the Eucharist). What is the Church - Origins, and the church in 21st Century. The Laws of the Church - Canon Law. The Four Last things - Death Judgement, Hell & Heaven. Sacramentals - The Rosary, Benedictions, the Lives of the Saints, other Catholic Devotions. The Role of the Virgin Mary in God's plan of Salvation. "Lord, teach us how to pray." - Many different kinds of Prayer. The Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. The Paschal Mystery. Journey through Holy Week.

If you know anyone who may be interested in learning about the faith, please give them this information, and ask them to contact Fr John - Tel No: 01277 265235. It's always good to sit down personally and explain to all enquirers how the programme works. The New Programme will commence in September.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PROGRAMME: The final formal class for the First Holy Communion Programme took place last week. Parents, could I ask you to ensure that your children have completed all the various home exercises, especially if you have missed any of the sessions. I would like to take this public opportunity of expressing my sincere and grateful thanks to our Catechists, who give of their time freely to help the children prepare for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist.

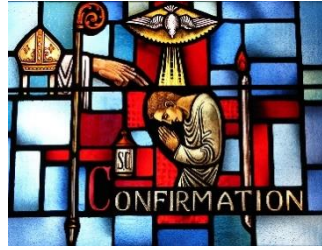


First Holy Communion Celebrations will take place on:
Saturday, 9th May at 11am - Rehearsal Wednesday, 6th May at 6pm
Saturday, 9th May at 2pm - Rehearsal Wednesday, 6th May at 7pm
Saturday, 16th May at 11am - Rehearsal Wednesday, 13th May, 6pm.

Please keep all the children and their families in your prayers at this very important time of final preparations to receive Jesus in Holy Communion.

CONFIRMATION PROGRAMME FOR ADULTS

2026/2027: For whatever reason, sometimes young people do not always complete a Confirmation Programme during their adolescent and teenage years but often return to the practice of the faith as adults. I have had several requests for an Adult Confirmation Programme. I am hoping to begin an Adult Confirmation Programme



later in the year; could I make a request to the whole parish community to see if there is any more interest in the programme and receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation? Fr Matúš runs the Teenage Programme.

ADULT CONFIRMATION GROUP: For those already preparing to receive Adult Confirmation in May. Our next session will take place on *Tuesday, 28th April at 7.00pm* in Clergy House. Theme: Baptism and Confirmation

**CONFIRMATION
2026**

CONFIRMATION PROGRAMME: The final formal session of this year's programme took place last Sunday afternoon. Rehearsal & Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation will take place on *Wednesday, 20th May at*

6.30pm. It is customary before any big event in the life of faith that we celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I encourage all our Confirmandi to avail yourselves of the Sacrament.

The Sacrament of Confirmation will be conferred by Bishop Alan on Pentecost *Sunday, 24th May 2026 at the 11.30am Mass*. Please keep all our Confirmandi in your prayers over these next weeks in the final preparations for the celebration of the Sacrament.

MAY - THE MONTH DEDICATED TO

MARY: May is traditionally the Month we associate with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary's role in the whole of God's plan of Salvation is powerfully significant.



In her humble Yes to God, she changed the whole course of human history and brought forth Our Saviour Jesus Christ into the world. As the poet Wordsworth wrote "she is humanity's solitary boast." I encourage all our parishioners to honour Mary during her special month. The Rosary is very much Mary's prayer; you could pray the

rosary daily, or even a decade of the rosary. At the end of each weekday Mass, we will pray a decade of the Rosary.



FORTHCOMING MARRIAGES 2026: This is a call to all who are preparing for Marriage this year 2026, whether here at the Cathedral or abroad. Could I ask you all to ensure that your documentation is completed at least two months before the wedding, especially for those marrying abroad. All documents need to be returned to Fr John or Fr Matúš so that they can be processed expeditiously. Please ensure that the Marriage Preparation Course is completed through Marriage Care; new Baptismal Certificates no older than six months have been obtained; Statutory Declarations of

Freedom have been signed by a Notary. The Chancery is always closed during the month of August, so it is imperative that all documentation is received prior to then. Thank you!

PARISH ENQUIRY: Can you help? Is there a Physiotherapist in the Cathedral Parish? If so, and you are able, could you contact the Parish Office and give your details Thank you!



PARISH REPOSITORY: There are many Religious Cards: First Holy Communion, Confirmation, Memoriam Cards, Birthday & Feast Day Cards, and many more. Statues, Easter gifts, children's books, rosaries, medals, prayers books, and lots of First Holy Communion gifts. Margaret Walker who oversees the Repository is also willing to order anything you want. Just speak to her after the 9.30am Mass. There are several girls' First Holy Communion dresses in the Upper Room above the Cathedral. If anyone is interested, please let us know.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE REPOSE OF THE SOUL OF SALLY ANN TURNEY, who died on 15th March and whose Requiem will take place in The Cathedral at 11.00am on Monday, 27 April.

May God bless you all.

COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS TODAY: will be hosted by the Altar Servers. Next week will be the turn of SVP. All are welcome, please do join us.

THE FRIDAY FRIENDSHIP SOUP LUNCHES: All are welcome to come along to the parish hall every Friday (12 noon - 2.00 p.m.) for sandwiches, 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

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 of 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.

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.

LUNCHTIME MUSIC RECITAL Please join us on *Wednesday, 29th April* at *1.00pm* for a music recital to be given by Stefan Weidner.

PILGRIMAGE TO KNOCK SHRINE & CO. MAYO LED BY BISHOP ALAN WILLIAMS *Monday, 15th June 2026 to Friday, 19th June 2026*. 4 nights in Knock House Hotel, with Dinner, Bed & Breakfast. Visit Kylemore Abbey, Croagh Patrick, Ballintubber Abbey, Fr. Peyton Centre. Price of £799.00 per person. The package includes: Return flight from London Stansted, 10kg check in bag, 4 nights Dinner, B&B in Knock House Hotel, all entertainment, excursions and guided tours. Assistance from Knock Pilgrimages representative. Single room supplement £250.00. Maximum 3. Contact: Patricia on 01268 762 278 or 07740 175 557 or at knockpilgrimages@gmail.com

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, 17th - Friday, 24th July*. Please visit <https://tangney-tours.com/brentwood> for further information and to book, or contact Deirdre Pembroke, lourdes@brcdt.org.

CAR PARK Could I please ask anyone who uses the car park to be considerate of all users. In recent weeks, parking, particularly for Sunday morning Masses, has been very difficult to manage with drivers parking where they shouldn't and blocking essential access points. We must always ensure there is clear access for emergency vehicles. 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.

WALSINGHAM HOUSE TEAM APPLICATIONS - Applications are open for those finishing Year 13 or university who are interested in a year of volunteering at Walsingham House. It is a unique opportunity to grow in faith, serve others and gain key life skills along the way! For further information, please email clairebailey@brcdt.org.

A DAY WITH MARY PILGRIMAGES 2026

Pilgrimage to Fatima (Wednesday, 8th to Wednesday, 15th July 2026). Closing date Tuesday, 28th April 2026

Pilgrimage to Italy (Tuesday, 1st to Thursday, 10th September 2026). Closing date 23 June 2026

Further information is available at <https://www adaywithmary.org/>

ST JOHN BOSCO CHILDREN'S CAMP, SUMMER 2026. Applications are now open for children currently in school year 5 - 7 (i.e. aged 9-12 in August 2026) to spend a week at camp. 25th July - 1st August or 1st - 8th August. Activities include archery, fishing, AquaPark visit, football, kayaking and much more. The camp is especially for children who may not otherwise have a summer holiday. Suggested donation £200, but full bursaries are available. All application details are at <https://boscocamp.co.uk>. Places are likely to go quickly - early applications are encouraged.

GARDEN VOLUNTEERS FOR WALSINGHAM HOUSE AT ABBOTSWICK: Walsingham House at Abbotswick is set in 14 acres of land which require a lot of care. There is an amazing team of grounds volunteers who help every Tuesday to maintain the gardens and keep everything thriving. It would be wonderful to extend the team, so if you have some free time on a Tuesday, whether it's an hour or two or a whole day and would like to get involved please contact clairebailey@brcdt.org or just come along on a Tuesday morning and get involved!

MASS FOR MIGRANTS - You are warmly invited to join the Dioceses of Brentwood, Southwark, and Westminster for the 20th annual Mass for Migrants on Bank Holiday *Monday, 4 May 2026*, at St Antony of Padua Catholic Church. The celebration will begin at 12.00 pm with a procession of banners.

This year, the Mass is hosted by the Diocese of Brentwood. Celebrated for the Feast of St Joseph the Worker, the Mass is prepared by the Caritas and Ethnic Chaplaincies of the three dioceses and gives thanks for the contributions made to faith, life and work in the UK by all those who have come from other countries to make their home here.

The preacher will be Archbishop Richard Moth, and the celebrant will be Bishop Alan Williams, SM.

BRENTWOOD URSULINE - MUSICAL APTITUDE ASSESSMENTS FOR MUSIC SCHOLARSHIPS & PLACES - YEAR 7 ADMISSION SEPTEMBER 2027 Is offering 17 of the Year 7 places for admission in September 2027, on the basis of musical aptitude.

Parents wishing to apply should submit the appropriate form (available to download from the website www.brentwoodursuline.co.uk or direct from the school). Completed forms must be sent to the school by Friday, 17th July 2026. For further information, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

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 Giftpaid-it

If you are unable to donate with Giftpaid-It then please use the codes below.

Donate £3.00	Donate £5.00	Donate £10.00	Donate £20.00

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