

**BAPTISMS IN THE PARISH:** If you have a child due for Baptism please let me know as soon as possible. To avoid any disappointment with dates contact the Presbytery to book your date. If you are first-time parents, you need to contact Sharon Chalk, who will organise a Baptismal Preparation of two sessions, and then I will come and visit you in your homes. Please don't forget to collect your Baptismal Information Form.



**YOUR CRIB OFFERINGS** Will go to the work of the Brentwood Catholic Children's Society. This wonderful Diocesan organisation does not receive government funding so is heavily dependent upon all charitable diocesan contributions. You have always been very generous with offerings in the past. Your Crib Offering envelopes will be collected in today after all masses. All other donations are gratefully received!

**VOLUNTEERS FOR PLAYGROUP:**

Parents, Grandparents, Carers, members of the parish. We are in urgent need of more volunteers to help at our Parent & Toddler group which meets every Thursday morning term-time 9.45am – 11.30am in the Church Hall. This is a really lovely friendly group which is invaluable to the young children of our parish. If you can help in any way please get in touch. We appreciate that volunteers cannot be there every week. You can pop into the Parish Hall one Thursday to register or e.mail Andy on [andrew.godsave@ntlworld.com](mailto:andrew.godsave@ntlworld.com)



**MASS FOR THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:** Bishop Alan Williams will be celebrating a special mass for those with Special Needs on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2018 at 3.00pm at Brentwood Cathedral. Everyone is welcome!

**IN CASES OF EMERGENCY:** Tuesday is usually Fr. John's Day Off. In cases of emergency please call one of the local parishes, either in Epping – Tel: 01992 572516, or the St. Thomas of Canterbury Friary at Woodford Green – Tel: 020 8504 1688. This would also apply if Fr. John is away for a few days break or on Retreat. All the local funeral directors have a contact number for Fr. John if a funeral needs to be arranged in his absence.

Dear Friends in Christ

Sixth Sunday of the Year 2018

We tend to think of leprosy as an ancient disease when, in fact, it is actually sadly very much also a modern one, infecting millions of people even today. Over six hundred people are diagnosed every day, fifty of which are children. Over three million people are living with undiagnosed leprosy and over four million are living with a disability caused by leprosy. Now as then, the disease carried a terrible stigma, with sufferers being cast out and rejected by their families and their communities.

Leprosy is a bacterial infection which affects the skin and nervous system. The first symptom is usually a patch of discoloured skin and, if left untreated, the disease can cause loss of sensation, resulting in amputation, ulcers and blindness. Leprosy is passed through coughing, sneezing a long-term contact with someone who has the disease. That's the bad news. The good news is that it is now completely curable through multi-drug therapy.



In Jesus' day things were even worse for lepers – they were cast out of the community and all contact was forbidden. For Mark, Jesus is the healer of every disease and sickness, both physical and spiritual. Although we are unlikely to be infected with leprosy. We are all afflicted with the leprosy of sin. We all sin against God, ourselves, and against others. Furthermore, sin is infectious: if we are angry, we pass on anger; if we are resentful we pass on resentment; if we are impatient, intolerant and unkind, these vices are passed on, one to another.

Jesus came to make us all clean – clean of sin and free of its debilitating consequences. Jesus wants us to know his healing touch but this can only happen if we recognise, as the leper does into today's gospel, that we need healing. Lepers of old would cry our 'Unclean! Unclean!' We know deep in our hearts that we need to be cleansed, purified and liberated from the sin that prevents us from enjoying life to the full. We seek the healing of Christ in many ways; through prayer and in reading the Scriptures, but supremely through the healing presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

*Dear Friends in Christ,*

*We are about to embark on our Lenten Journey once again! Ash Wednesday, (14<sup>th</sup> March) marks the beginning of this Penitential Season. Every year we make this journey with various resolutions and promises. Some may make the personal sacrifices of giving up some luxury or pleasure; others may embrace an additional penance or task, which of course, is always personal to the individual. But the main objective of the Lenten Season is to help to prepare us for the greatest event within the whole history of creation and the world, that at a moment in time, God's only Son Jesus Christ was raised from death, and through the saving action of the Cross, won salvation for the whole human race!*



*Hopefully, the desire of every Catholic Christian is to deepen their relationship with the Living Lord Jesus, and anything that can help in this process can only be a good thing! Whether it's our personal sacrifices or our additional penances, we have these next several weeks to really enter into the spirit of the Season.*



**ASH  
WEDNESDAY**

*On Ash Wednesday, we are starkly reminded of our own mortality; we are signed in ash on our foreheads with the Cross of Christ, reminding us of the Saving Action of Jesus Christ, but also our own mortality, "remember you are dust, and unto dust you shall return" - and we are invited to enter into the Divine Mystery with the Lord; to travel with him through these forty days, ultimately through to his Passion Death and Resurrection. There will be three masses on Ash Wednesday: 9.00am, 12.15pm & 8.00pm. What more fitting way to enter into the Holy Season than to ask the Lord to bless us and our families. Please come and receive your ashes, which will be distributed at all the masses!*

*"Because of the increase of iniquity, the love of many will grow cold." (Matthew 24:12). This is the theme of Pope Francis' Lenten message this year. God in his providence offers us each year the season of Lent as a "sacramental sign of our conversion". Lent summons us, and enables us, to come back to the Lord wholeheartedly and in every aspect of our life.*

*May God Bless You All*

**ALTAR SOCIETY:** We are always in need of new members for the parish Altar Society. The Altar Society in this parish has been in existence for many years; they have done such sterling work through the years, and I'm truly grateful to all the members for keeping our churches in such a beautiful condition. If you are able to give an hour or so once a month, please see Veronica Short or any member of the Altar Society. Thank you!

**SICK & HOUSEBOUND PARISHIONERS:** If you would like me to make a visit to those in hospital or those who are housebound, please contact me at the presbytery. Tel No: 020 8508 3492 It is always good to know when parishioners are going into hospital; I can then contact the Chaplains in the various hospitals to arrange a visit and Holy Communion. This service is available for all hospitals. Also if Sick parishioners would like Holy Communion brought to their homes on a regular basis please speak to Fr. John. This is one of the Corporal Works of Mercy.



**PREPARING FOR HOLY WEEK:** On Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> March from 7 p.m. until 8.30 pm Fr David Manson will be presenting a talk entitled 'Preparing for Holy Week'. This 'Gidea Park Faith Evening' will take place in the hall at Gidea Park Catholic Church (410 Brentwood Road, Gidea Park, RM2 6DH). Please book by email to [GPstudydays@gmail.com](mailto:GPstudydays@gmail.com) Refreshments provided. Admission free.

**SCIENCE TUITION:** The Secondary science learning centre is running GCSE and A level science classes at St Teresa's Hall (chingford) and the Beckett Centre (Woodford) in small groups at just £15 a session. Contact us for more information and to book your child a place: Tel: [07940056928](tel:07940056928) or Email: [Secondaryscience@outlook.com](mailto:Secondaryscience@outlook.com)

**NATIONAL MARRIAGE WEEK:** Please pray for all couples across the diocese preparing to get married in the coming year, and pray also for all couples experiencing difficulties in their marriage. If you would like to find out about opportunities to help with marriage preparation, relationship counselling or helping young people explore what marriage is about, please contact the marriage and family life department on [marriage@dioceseofbrentwood.org](mailto:marriage@dioceseofbrentwood.org). Follow us on Twitter @BrentwoodMandFL. If you are experiencing difficulties in your own marriage, Marriage Care may be able to help – call 0800 389 3801.

## PARISH GIFT AID SCHEME

The end of the Financial Year is almost upon us and the New Boxes of Envelopes are ready for collection by those parishioners who belong to the Gift Aid Scheme. I will be outside the Church after all the Weekend masses on 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> March & 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> March. I shall be grateful if you will please kindly collect your new boxes after the masses on those weekends.

A large proportion of parishioners now belong to the Gift Aid Scheme and the Inland Revenue returns 25p in the pound which raises over £20,000 per year for the parish at no cost to the parishioners. However, only about 60% of the parishioners who belong to the scheme use their envelopes every week, which results in a considerable loss to the parish. If you forget your envelope there are spares at the back of the Church. Just write your number on the envelope or your name if you've forgotten your number.

If you do not belong to the Gift Aid Scheme and pay tax, please give it some serious consideration and join the scheme. All that's required is the completion of a form with your name and address. The parish can then claim back the tax you have paid on your donations such as Offertory Collection, Second Collections, Mass Offerings, and any other donation that you make to the Church. A large number of parishioners now make their Offertory Collection by Standing Order, which means that they do not have to remember to use an envelope. Just ask me and I will give you the appropriate form. You will be given a small box of envelopes for second collections. E.g. Christmas & Easter Offerings, Cafod, etc. If you belong to the Gift Aid Scheme and no longer pay tax, then please let me know and I will cancel the arrangement.

The ongoing running costs of the parish is continually rising, utilities, water, heating lighting in all the properties. Maintenance of all our buildings, the monthly diocesan quota of £2,186.00, Please keep these things in mind, and please join the scheme!

On behalf of Fr John thank you for your continued support  
Brian Carter – Parish Gift Aid Organiser. Tel No: 020 8508 4086

EXHIBITION OF THE SHROUD OF TURIN: Will take place at Lady Immaculate Church, London Road, Chelmsford, Chelmsford, Essex from 5<sup>th</sup> March till 11<sup>th</sup> March 2018. During this time there will be a replica of the Shroud in the Church, and a large exhibit of the original Shroud. The Norbertine Fathers extend a special welcome to all members of the diocese of Brentwood.



NEW PARISH COUNCILLORS: If you feel that you would like to serve the Parish Community, as a Councillor for a period of three years, please speak to Fr. John. There are a cross section of parishioners with various professional expertise now serving; 4 or 5 more councillors would bring our numbers up to capacity. Please speak to Fr. John or Leona Foster (Chair of Parish Council, for more information.

IRREGULAR MARRIAGES: What is an irregular marriage? By the virtue of the Sacrament of Baptism, every Roman Catholic is bound by their Roman Catholic faith. If a Roman Catholic contracts a marriage outside of the Catholic faith: i.e. in a non-Catholic Church without dispensation; in a Register Office; in any Civil ceremony in a secular venue and not a registered Catholic Church; on a beach or in a hotel; in Las Vegas; married abroad without the Catholic Church's dispensations and permissions; these marriages are not legally or formally recognised by the Catholic Church. Fortunately, the Church is able to rectify these marriages through Convalidation. It is the Church's way of granting validity to marriages outside the Church, and enabling them to become Sacramental. The pre-requisite for Convalidation is that the couple are free to enter the contract of marriage, that there is no previous marriage other than the one to be rectified. This is a very private and confidential facility offered by the Catholic Church. Through the years I have celebrated many Convalidations. If anyone would like to speak to me confidentially about this process, please don't hesitate to contact me as soon as possible!  
Tel No: 020 8508 3492



WEDDINGS IN 2018: If you're planning on getting married this year, the parish needs approximately 6 months' notice! If you're getting married abroad, we need at least nine months' notice please Tel No: 020 8508 3492. Documentation and Marriage Instructions need to be taken place.  
*Dear Friends in Christ,*



**ASH WEDNESDAY** is on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2015 and marks the beginning of the Holy Season of Lent. This Penitential Season is given to us by the Church to help us prepare ourselves spiritually for the 'Great Holy Week', which retraces the Lord Jesus' last days here on earth. We journey with Him through His Passion, Death & Resurrection. This is a familiar journey, and as Catholic Christians, let us make a very special effort to enter this Holy Season with renewed faith and vigour!

**PRAYER:** The Three main disciplines of Lent are Prayer, Fasting & Almsgiving (Charity). These next Forty days will give us the opportunity to really make a special effort in our spiritual lives with our personal prayer. Why not put aside a few moments every day as your very special prayer time! We have little Prayer Reflection Books available at £1 each called 'WALK WITH ME', these can be kept in your inside pocket or a ladies handbag and can be used to help with prayer. As you know we have a library at the back of St. Edmund's. There are many spiritual books that can be borrowed. (Please kindly return the books when you've read them).

**FRIDAY FASTING:** Was restored in England & Wales. Personal Penance identifies us with the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. Friday has always been the traditional Fast Day, as it reminds us of Good Friday, the day on which the Lord gave himself completely for the Salvation of Humanity. The re-establishment of this Friday Fast means that we abstain from the eating of meat every Friday! (not just during Lent). A little sacrifice in our diet once a week will certainly not harm our health. As families, it would be good to say grace before & after meals together. These are practical and visible ways of our personal self-sacrifice!

**ALMSGIVING:** or works of Charity have always been associated with the Catholic Faith. We have a special Fast Day for CAFOD during Lent, Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018. This is a very practical way to associate ourselves with those who are far less fortunate than ourselves. You may like to adopt a Third World Project, or, you may know of someone who is housebound and might like to visit them or shop for them. Anything that reaches out to someone else in charity can only be a good thing! Please make a very special effort to enter this Holy Season of Lent in faith and Love!

May God Bless You All,

## The Season of Lent

**AN EXTRA MASS FOR LENTEN WEEKDAYS:** As part of your Lenten resolve, why not make an extra special to attend and additional Mass during the week. There are many retired parishioners in our parish community; the weekday masses last about half an hour, and it's a wonderful routine to get into. If you feel so inclined, why not try to make it every day during Lent!

**SPIRITUAL READING:** If you are unable to come to weekday Mass, why not try some regular spiritual reading. We have a wonderful library full of spiritual books; you're very welcome to borrow any of the books, as long as you return them.

**HOLY HOUR:** Why not make a Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament during the Week. The Church is open from 7.00am in the morning until late dark. Personal prayer is a wonderful way to deepen your relationship with the Lord Jesus. There is also an additional Holy Hour and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on Fridays during Lent from 10.45am to 11.45am followed by Stations of the Cross.

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS:** The traditional devotion of the Lenten Season, on Friday's at 11.45am and Sunday afternoons at 5.00pm. This very beautiful and moving devotion retraces the Lord's last steps on his journey to Calvary. Please make a very special effort to join us!

**THE HOLY ROSARY:** This ancient prayer has been a great source of inspiration to many of the Saints of God through the past eight centuries. It may be an opportunity to explore the Rosary for the first time. Parents, why not take the time to teach your children the various mysteries and how to pray the rosary.

**CAFOD LENTEN FAMILY FAST DAY:** This year falls on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018 This is our way of associating with our brothers and sisters who do not have as much to eat as we do! What we save we send to CAFOD (Catholic Association for Overseas Development). Special envelopes will be included in your parish newsletters next weekend. Make a very special effort with your fasting! The CAFOD envelopes will be collected in the following weekend 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> March 2018

**CAFOD**  
Just one world