

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.



EPPING FOREST CHRISTMAS FOODBANK DONATIONS: Thank you to all parishioners who have donated items for the Foodbank. *Food Bank* With Christmas fast approaching the Foodbank are collecting festive items for distribution next month. Any of the items below that you can donate will spread some Christmas cheer to those in need: tinned ham, custard, jam, Christmas pudding, Christmas cake, Yule log, biscuits, savoury biscuits, boxes of chocolates, crisps, Christmas crackers Thank you! They are also in need of small boxes of washing powder or pods and men's razors. You can also keep up to date with the Foodbank via their Facebook page: www.facebook.com/EppingForestFoodbank/

LOUGHTON FOODBANK: Throughout the Sundays of Advent, as part of a charitable preparation for Christmas, we should like to encourage donations to the Loughton Foodbank. Many local families struggle at this time of year and there will be a box available on the Sanctuary for your donations. Thank you!



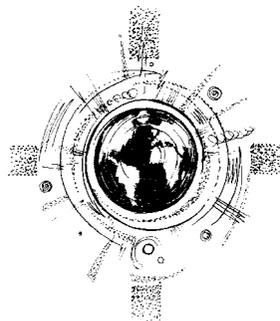
YOUR WEEKLY OFFERTORY: Just a reminder that your weekly offertory is your offering to God in thanksgiving and gratitude for so much that he gives to us in our daily lives. If you use the Parish Gift Aid Scheme, please ensure that you use your GA envelopes each week. And please keep your envelopes up to date. If you forget your envelope, there are plenty of spare ones in the porch, please put your number on the envelope, or your name. If you would like to join the Parish Gift Aid Scheme, there are forms in the porch. We can claim back 25pence in the pound, from your weekly offertory. Please think about joining. Thank you for your generosity.

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,

First Sunday of Advent, Year A

Advent is a Season of Light. It is a time in which the light of Christ shines forth into our lives and onto our world, and we receive a great gift; 'to us a child is born, to us a Son is given'. In John's Gospel, Christ says of himself: 'I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness'.



The Advent season has its roots in the pagan festival of the winter solstice. The word 'solstice' is derived from the Latin word *sol* (sun) and *sister* (to stand still). The pagan world hungered for light and worshipped the sun god *Sol Invictus*, who was invoked each day at sunrise. As bright and as powerful as the sun is, we know it cannot cast its light on the greatest mysteries of our existence or penetrate the darkness of sin and death. The prophet Isaiah declared hundreds of years before the birth of Christ: 'The people who walked in the darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness. On them has light shined'. Advent then is an opportunity for us to come into this light, see with the light of Christ and walk our pilgrim way such that we let our light shine.

Advent literally means 'coming' and the church has always sought to remind us during this holy season of the three comings of Christ: his first at his birth, his second at his return to earth in glory, and his third when he comes into each of our lives. The work of the Spirit in our lives is twofold: he compels us to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father, and also moves us to pray with heartfelt longing, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come.'

Jesus is the meaning of Christmas. He is the meaning of human existence. The baby born in the stable, in poverty and helplessness as God made man, is our light and hope. We lift up our hearts in praise and thanksgiving for Jesus who is the Light of the World, the light which darkness could not extinguish or overcome.

MARANATHA, COME LORD JESUS!

Dear Friends in Christ,

First Sunday of Advent

This First Sunday of Advent 2013 marks the beginning of a New Liturgical Year. This season of waiting is renewed each year as we begin the journey that will lead us to the Incarnation at Christmas. God will deign to assume our human condition in the lowliness and helplessness of an infant born in the stable in Bethlehem. We know the Nativity Story so well, but each year we bring with us all the events and circumstances of the past twelve months. As we grow in knowledge and maturity of life, hopefully we also grow in a deepening awareness of the One Lord Jesus Christ.



ADVENT CHALLENGE: I would like to invite every parishioner to seriously think about our brothers and sisters who no longer attend Holy Mass. They may be your children, or friends or neighbours; they may be people that you work with. At this time of the year when everything seems to be focused on the material aspect of the season, it takes a great deal of courage to talk about the real meaning of Christmas. Parents, I encourage

non-practicing children back to Church; this can be done by helping young people to realise that the Church is a place of love and faith, can be a great challenge, especially when other things are on offer to them. The future of the Church is in the hands of how these young people will become the responsible adults of tomorrow! If little or no encouragement is placed on the part of the Church, then the likelihood is that the young person will choose nothing! I'm more and more alarmed at how many parents these days attend mass without their children; once a child has received Holy Communion, the obligation to participate in the Sunday Eucharist is compulsory. Attending Holy Mass is not an optional exercise; it is a reflection for one hour on a Sunday morning how to be committed in faith. **COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS!**

CHRISTMAS LOUGHTON FOOD BANK: You can see the two Red Food Boxes on the Sanctuary; this is to receive your food gifts for the Food Bank. It is good to be able to give to those less fortunate than ourselves especially at Christmas. Please be generous! May God Bless You All,

APPLICATIONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES FOR online to Essex County Education Department for your child (Reception) School place for September 2020. You have until 15



make your application. If you are applying for a place at St. John Fisher Roman Catholic Primary School, and you're a practicing Roman Catholic you will need a signed Certificate of Catholic Practice from your Parish Priest. CCP Forms can only be obtained from Fr. John
ST JOHN FISHER PRIMARY SCHOOL- VISIT DATES: Visit and meetings for prospective parents. Wednesday 4th December at 2.00pm. Thursday 9th January at 9.15am. The visit will give parents the opportunity to view the school and ask any questions they may have. If you would like to visit the school on one of the dates please contact the school office on Tel No: 020 8508 6315 or e-mail tmcgrenra@st-johnfisher.essex.sch.uk We look forward to seeing you on one of the above dates. Mr Michael Ross, Headteacher, will speak at the end of all masses next weekend.

CHURCH CLEANING – ALTAR SOCIETY: We are in need of some new helpers to join the Altar Society's Church Cleaning Service. This really is not an onerous task, probably an hour each week. The more helpers we have the less frequently you will be needed. I do appeal to the community, in your charity, could you give an hour or so a month? There are various tasks within the Altar Society, and there may be a specific job that you might like to assume? Our Altar Society has been running for over 75 years; but it can't function without voluntary help. Please consider this request and see Sharon Fitzmaurice or one of the Altar Society or Fr. John for more information. Thank you! PS. There's always a 'Big Clean' in preparation for Christmas, which all parishioners are invited to participate in and help.



FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PROGRAMME 2019/2020: The Communion Programme continues Sunday 1st December at 10.00am in the Parish Hall. The theme of Listening will be explored, specifically through the Parables. Just a little reminder of the invitation that was given to all parents of our First Communion Children, you are most welcome to attend any or all the sessions that we have with the children. First and foremost, it allows you to see how we teach the Sacramental Programme, and secondly, you can be involved with the children preparation at a practical level.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS: The Journey of Faith RCIA Programme continues Thursday 5th December at 8.00pm in the Presbytery. Theme: The Eucharist (2) The Mass and the Practice of Faith. Mankind's need to worship God, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit. The Catechists are Fr John and Aidan Potter. If you would like to join us, we will be meeting in the Presbytery on a Thursday evening at 8.00pm.



CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS TABLEAU: It's almost that time again we would love for your children to be involved. We need readers, angels of shepherds and angels so if you can attend and your child would please let one of the liturgy team know. We will be rehearsing mass on 8/12 and 15/12 please come along. Any queries please contact Claire on 07876 710251 or clairefabb@googlemail.com. Many thanks from the children's liturgy team!



WIS FOR 2020: If you're planning of getting married in 2020, could you contact Fr. John as soon as possible. Obviously, there is a lot of work that goes into organising a wedding. The administrative and legal aspect of this is extremely important, especially when getting married in Church. Marriage Preparation Days for engaged couples are organised by Marriage Care on a regular basis. If you're getting married abroad, we need at least nine months' notice. Thank you!



CHRISTMAS MUSIC CONCERT: At St John's Church, Loughton, Wednesday 4th December. The internationally recognised London Handel players will be performing Christmas concertos by Vivaldi, Corelli and Handel. The concert starts at 7.30pm and tickets are £10 (adults) and £8 (concessions) with children free. There will be refreshments included. Please call 0208 532 0060 between 9am and 1pm for tickets.

FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES – Mulled wine and mince pies Join other parishioners for mulled wine and mince pies and other treats at 6pm Mass on Saturday 14th December. This will be a chance to socialise in the run-up to Christmas. We should like to apologise for providing mince pies and/or Christmas sweet treats. If you can help, please bring them along to the hall before Mass on the day itself. Everyone welcome!



FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES NEW INITIATIVE Discipleship: Becoming More Like CHRIST. Events and initiatives have grown from our Parish Evangelisation following the work we did on *Forming Intentional Disciples* which include the parish barbecue, forest walk, faith sharing, flowers for Mother's Day, Flower festival, Dr Doherty's history talk, and our very successful youth Mass. At our next meeting, we shall be planning new events for next year, including an *International Food Evening*. We are also considering using the *Divine Renovation* programme by Fr James Mallon to help move our parish, 'from maintenance to mission'. Can you help? This is an enthusiastic and

friendly group. Please consider getting actively involved and joining us at our next meeting on Monday 9th December (8pm) in the parish hall. Everyone very welcome.

Our Parish Evangelisation Team (PET) meets monthly to:

1. Pray together;
2. Reflect on, and to discuss, opportunities to spread the Good News among our own parishioners and the wider community;
3. Plan and organise a wide range of activities in our parish;
4. Help each other to develop our faith and our relationship with Jesus Christ through words and actions.

We have sent an email to all those that signed up at the meetings. If you have not received it, please email markpoulter70@hotmail.com for further details. If you would like to join the parish *WhatsApp* group to find out about events and help, please contact Iain McLay on 07806 998187. Iain will add you to the group and put you in touch with other volunteers.

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS: It is the responsibility for every Eucharistic Minister to find a substitute if they are unable to exercise their ministry at a mass. Of late there have been a lot of EM's missing from their mass, at times leaving us short. I would ask all EM's to be vigilant in your responsibility. It is a true a wonderful honour to give the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist to the faithful people of God. Your personal preparation and your attendance at holy Mass is essential for the Rota to function efficiently. Please consult your Rota regularly, keep it on your Notice Board at home.



MASS INTENTIONS: There are many vacancies throughout December for Mass Intentions, as we have run out of intentions. If you wanted Masses celebrated over the Christmas period this is a wonderful gift to people!

ANNUAL PARISH CHRISTMAS BAZAAR: Saturday 7th December 2019. 11.00am – 3.00pm. This is the last week before our Parish Bazaar. This is a final appeal to the whole parish community to your generosity in helping us prepare for the Bazaar with your gifts and items. We are still in need of more Grand Draw Prizes: the money prizes, Hampers, Restaurant Tickets, Theatre Tickets, X. Box, Crate of Wine, Champaign, Big Cuddly Toy, Amazon Echo & Dot, Luxury Beauty Hamper, Colour TV, and any other luxury item and gift. Any money donations



will be gratefully received. Please use your Spare Gift Aid envelopes for Money Donations. Grateful thanks to all those who have donated Gifts & Prizes for the Bazaar already!

GRAND DRAW TICKETS: Please kindly return the Ticket Stubbs & monies to the Presbytery as soon as possible. Whatever tickets you don't sell kindly return them to presbytery, hopefully we'll be able to sell them on the day of the Bazaar. There are some spare tickets in the porch if you need any more.

BOTTLE STALL: Is always one of the most popular stalls at the Bazaar. We are appealing for Bottles of Wine and Spirits. We are aiming for 300, in that way we can make the bottle stall much bigger this year. If you have bottles of Wine and Spirits, you can drop them off at the presbytery at any time. Please be generous! TO DATE WE HAVE 158 BOTTLES



FR. JOHN'S STALL: Every year I try to enter the full spirit of the Parish Bazaar; I run a stall with excellent prizes. They are all donated by your good selves! I appeal to the whole parish community for really good quality gifts for my stall. Thanking you all in anticipation of your generosity! Flat Screen Television is a must! A Christmas Hamper; I Pad, or I Pod; Kindle; Crate of Wine; Amazon Echo or Amazon Dot, Theatre Tickets; CD Music Player; X Box; Restaurant Vouchers, Theatre Vouchers and any other luxury goods that you might think worthy of a special raffle. Thanking you in anticipation!

COULD ANY PARISHIONERS PLEASE DONATE SOME HAMPERS

CAKES & BAKED ITEMS: Many people bake cakes these days. Could I make a special appeal to all our bakers for homemade cakes and pies? You can deliver them on Friday the 6th December or Saturday morning the 7th December. These are always popular at the Bazaar.

SETTING UP THE BAZAAR: On Friday 6th December we will be setting up in the Parish Hall for the Bazaar. We will need a lot of help. If you're able to come assist us, we would be most grateful. All the Bazaar items must be transported into the hall and sorted into the various stalls. Please come and help!

PLEASE COME & SUPPORT OUR PARISH BAZAAR: Finally, I would like to invite all our parishioners to come and support the annual parish Bazaar. This is always a wonderful Parish Event, and a time for the whole parish community to begin the Christmas Season.



PARISH RESPOSITORY AT THE BAZAAR: We have a wonderful selection of New Religious Items and goods, which will be displayed at our Parish Bazaar. There are a variety of New Christmas Cards, Books, Religious statues, medals. There are Cribs for the family home, which I would certainly encourage every family to possess. Christmas Candles. Children's Books, and many other items.

CHRISTMAS MASSES: As we begin the Holy Season of Advent people always like to know in advance the times of Masses at Christmas. Our Christmas Eve Masses on Tuesday 24th December will begin with our Family Mass with Nativity Tableau at 5.00pm
Vigil Mass at 7.30pm preceded by Carols at 7.00pm
Christmas Night Mass at 11.00pm preceded by Carols at 10.30pm concluding at Christmas Midnight

Christmas Day Masses on Wednesday 25th December

9.00am Christmas Morning Mass
11.00am Christmas Morning Family Mass
Please put these times in your diaries.

SEMINARIANS FOR CHRISTMAS: several seminarians from the Pontifical North American College will come to spend Christmas & New Year with us. You are always so kind and hospitable to our seminarians, who aren't allowed home at Christmas. I have always tried to give them a 'home from home' experience at this special time of the year when they are so far away from home. If you can help in anyway whatsoever, I'd be truly grateful. They all love desserts and sweet goodies; also my experience of their 'tippie' over a number of years is whiskey, gin & port. The first group arrive on 21st December.

