

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. 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/

Food Bank

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,

Second Sunday of Advent, Year A, 2019

Perhaps people of every age have struggled with the stern and somewhat harsh message of John the Baptist. Living and preaching in the wilderness, dressed in rough clothing woven from camel hair, and eating locusts and wild honey was pretty strange and outlandish even then! Most people would run a mile from John the Baptist and his message of repentance – or so you would think! Yet Matthew tells us that, on the contrary, people flocked to him to confess their sins and undergo a ritual cleansing in the Jordan.

What made the people behave in this way? Was the message of repentance, confession and reconciliation more attractive then than now? What was it about the Baptist that created this reaction? These questions encourage us to reflect on this most important aspect of the Christian life. Nowadays we seem to have moved away from sin, repentance, confession and conversion, perhaps judging this kind of emphasis to be no 'on message' any more. But, in doing so, we are making a great mistake because examination of our lives, confession and repentance are crucial to living the Christian life.

The season of Advent is a wonderful, God given opportunity to discover the gift of repentance and the grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When was your last confession? Some people go more regularly than others. The Church invites us to make a sacramental confession at least once a year, but many have not known the grace of this sacrament for a considerable number of years. To anyone in this situation God's hand of mercy and compassion is extended. Because our confession of sin is mediated through the priest in the confessional it does require special grace and some courage to open up our lives in this way. It is important to understand, however, that we are not confessing to the priest: we are laying down our burden before God. If a priest has received faculties to hear confessions (and this is not automatically granted by the bishop) we hope and pray that he has the necessary pastoral wisdom and maturity to facilitate this sacrament so that the penitent comes to know in a deeply personal way the mercy, forgiveness and compassion of God.



Dear Friends in Christ,
Advent

Second Sunday of



d Sunday of Advent at the 11.00am Mass our children preparing
Communion will be assisting with the Readings, Bidding
Prayer and Offertory today. The programme is designed to help the children
show their appreciation of their own involvement in the Sacred Liturgy.
We thank our Catechists and helpers for preparing the children for this
day!

A VERY BIG THANK YOU: To the whole Parish Community who supported
our Annual Parish Bazaar on Saturday. A great deal of hard work goes into
preparing for the Bazaar, several weeks in advance. I would like to say a very
special thank you to the Kelsey Howard, Joanne Jiggins & Lorraine Leith who
are our Bazaar organisers; they worked for several weeks, with various other
helpers, sorting all the gifts and items that came in. My thanks to all those who
came and helped us set up on Friday; and all those parishioners who helped
on the day, and all those who helped to clear up afterwards! This was very
much a Parish occasion, with everyone working together.

My grateful appreciation goes to you the parishioners
whose generosity have donated all the items and gifts for the
Bazaar. For the Grand Draw Prizes, For the Bottles, Prizes for My Stationery
& Toiletries. For those who donated Cakes, and food for the children.
Your kindness and inexhaustible generosity never ceases to amaze me
and all!



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,

FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES – Mulled wine and mince pies Invite
other parishioners for mulled wine and mince pies and other treats.
Mass next Saturday 14th December. This will be a chance to meet
everyone in the run-up to Christmas. We should like to appeal for help preparing
the 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!



May God Bless You All This Week

APPLICATIONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES FOR 2020 Apply
online to Essex County Education Department for your child.



(Reception) School place for September 2020. You have until 15th January to
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. 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. This weekend we welcome Mr Michael Ross, Headteacher, will speak at
the end of all our Masses about St. John Fisher School.

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 8th December at 10.00am in the
Parish Hall. The theme of Caring will be explored, specifically through the
Parables. Just a little reminder of the invitation that was given to you.
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 12th December at 8.00pm in the
Presbytery. Theme: The Sacrament of Reconciliation – Our need of God's
healing love of Sacramental forgiveness. 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.

WEDDINGS FOR 2020: If you're planning of getting married in 2020, you kindly contact Fr. John as soon as possible. Obviously, there is preparation that goes into organising a wedding. The administrative and spiritual aspect of this is extremely important, especially when you are 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!



Stewardship a way of life **THE GOSPEL:** Our Diocesan initiative in planning for the fourth year, will consider the next phase as they prepare Partnership reports by the beginning of Advent. Our Diocese, Epping & Waltham Abbey has been working hard over the past twelve months to prepare this report. We have now sent off the report and await a response from the Co-ordinators. On behalf of the Parish and the Partnership I would like to express my sincere and grateful thanks to Maureen Perry & Mark Poulter our Stewards of the Gospel who prepared the report. A great deal of hard work went into over these past months.

THE GOD WHO SPEAKS – THE YEAR OF THE WORD, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales have designated 'The God Who Speaks': A Year of the Word to celebrate the 10th anniversary of *Verbum Domini* - Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation 'The Word of the Lord', and the 1600th anniversary of death of St Jerome who translated the Bible into Latin.



Therefore, 2020 will be a year of celebrating, living and sharing God's word, through a range of events, activities and resources, available across the Diocese of Westminster.

We are invited to listen afresh to the word of God as did Our Blessed Lady at the Annunciation, to encounter anew the presence of that word, and to proclaim it afresh in the Church and the World.

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 Masses. At our next meeting, we shall be thinking and 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 Eucharistic Ministers 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. Also please check in at the Sacristy before mass so we know that you're in church. Obviously, it goes unsaid that all Ministers should be practicing Roman Catholics attending weekly mass! If there are any problems whatsoever, please see Fr. John or Ferdi Tisi (Chair of our Liturgy Committee).



Christmas Schedule for 2019

CHRISTMAS MASSES: As we begin the Holy Season of Advent people always like to know in advance the times of Masses at Christmas.

Christmas Eve Masses on Tuesday 24th December
Family Mass with Nativity Tableau at 5.00pm
Vigil Mass at 7.30pm preceded by Carols at 7.00pm

O Come,
O Come
Emmanuel



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

Feast of St. Stephen Thursday 26th December

Mass at 11.00am with enrolment into the Guild of St. Stephen. All welcome!

New Years Day. Wednesday 1st January

Family Mass at 11.00am. A beautiful way to begin the New Year 2020

Please put these times in your diaries.



NAC 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 'tipple' over several years is wine, whiskey, gin & port. The first group arrive on 21st December.

PARISH REPOSITORY: We have a wonderful range of new Christmas items; Christmas Cards, Christmas books for children, Christmas Candles, Advent Calendars, Statues, Medals, Rosaries, Children's Religious Bracelets, Cribs, Crucifixes & Crosses, Beautiful worded Wall Plaques. My thanks to Theresa Wallace and other helpers for kindly stocking the Repository over the past 18 months. I'm pleased to say that more of our parishioners are certainly investing in some beautiful religious items. Theresa is always willing to order religious items for you if you need them.



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 you to invite your non-practicing children back to Church; this can be done gently and lovingly. Helping young people to realise that the Church is a place of beauty, love and faith, can be a great challenge, especially when there are so many other things on offer to them. The future of the Church is very dependent on how these young people will become the responsible adult Catholics of tomorrow! If little or no encouragement is placed on the practice of the faith, 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 obligations 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!**

OUR TOWN THIS WEEK: In Loughton this week we saw the tragic death of Harley Watson (12 years of age) by a hit-and-run driver as he left Debden Park High School on his way home. Along with several others who were also injured badly this tragic incident has really shocked our town and people have responded accordingly. Flowers and prayers have been offered for little Harley and especially his family in this time of great loss. Holy Mass will be offered on Tuesday 10th December at 9.00am for Harley & his family. If you can attend, it would be a nice gesture of respect for this innocent little boy and his grieving family. May he rest in peace.



FOR PURCHASE: The Parish Diaries have arrived and are 50pence each. Also The Brentwood Diocesan Year Book with all up-to-date entries of everything that exists in the Diocese. Names of Clergy & Parishes, Commissions, addresses & contact details for all. Price £2.80