

The First Sunday of Advent

Happy New Year! This Sunday is the first week of Advent which is the beginning of the liturgical year. We have all learned that Advent is about waiting for the arrival of Jesus, but did you know that it is also about three periods of time? First, it's about the long centuries of preparation before Christ (BC). Second, it's the years of the Lord since his coming (AD). And third, it's about the great future when Christ will come again. What all of this means is that Jesus Christ is the centre of time, the beginning and the end. In him, the past is forgiven, the present moment is sanctified and our future glory is revealed.

So many people are unhappy today because they fail to find meaning in their lives. We do not see beyond what is in front of us, not caring what lies ahead. The true meaning of life is diluted by the culture of instant gratification. As a result, our lives are a series of disassociated moments. We live for the here and now which will pass. We do not care about what is to come, that which last for eternity. The season of Advent brings us back to the great circle of time in which everything is associated with everything else. Everything we do has a consequence. What we do now will affect how receptive we will be for Jesus' Advent. Will we be there welcoming him, or will we be so distracted that we will miss his arrival completely?

This Sunday's Gospel tells us to keep awake. We need to be vigilant against sleepiness which weakens our guard against the Evil One. If we don't keep awake, we are allowing ourselves to be prone to thoughts and tendencies which would lead us away from God, to distract us from his coming. We stay awake by praying constantly. To pray fervently is to stay alert.

Fr Antonio

CHRISTMAS MASSES

Dear Parishioners,

As you might expect, there will be Christmas Masses in the Parish, but I am afraid they will only be at St Joseph's and will be on Christmas 'eve at 5pm and 7pm and on Christmas Day at 9am and 11am. These four Masses will be streamed but will also be open to Parishioners to attend in person. There will also be a midnight Mass but that will be streamed ONLY. We are very sorry that it will not be possible to have Masses celebrated at Holy Cross or Most Holy Redeemer this year.

Like many Catholic Churches in the Country we are announcing a Ballot for places at the 4 Masses that will be open to our Parishioners. Some Parishes have held their ballots already. Under the current Regulations for Tier 2 we are only allowed to allow a very limited number of people into the Church for Mass.

Our ballot will open on Friday 27th November. You may enter the ballot for yourself **online** (<https://rcstortford.org.uk/ballot/>) as a single person, for a couple who, according to the Tier 2 Regulations are their own household, or for up to 6 members of your family who, according to the Tier 2 Regulations, are your own household. You must say which Mass you are applying to be put in the ballot for, but you may not apply for more than one Mass, in all, over Christmas 'Eve and Christmas Day together. Multiple applications will be discarded.

If you do not have the internet you are very welcome to telephone the Parish Office, **(01279 654063 9am to 3pm Mon to Fri only)** and we will take your details and enter them into the ballot. The ballot will close on Wednesday 9th December and will be drawn on Thursday 10th December

You will be told by telephone or email on Friday 11th December if you have been successful and a special ticket will be sent to you. If you are successful in the ballot, that ticket must be brought with you to the Mass and you will not be allowed to enter without it.

We are living in extraordinary times, who would ever have thought that we would not be able to welcome over 2,000 people over Christmas 'eve and Christmas Day as we did last year, but we must abide by the Regulations that will be in force.

Thank you for your understanding at this most difficult of times, and may God bless you and all that are dear to you in the Christmas season.

Fr Peter

Parish Note Friday 27 November 2020 and the Sunday Message from Fr Antonio on the 1st Sunday of Advent

Bishop's Stortford - St Joseph & The English Martyr <bishopsstortford@rcdow.org.uk>

Fri 11/27/2020 5:25 PM

To: Bishop's Stortford - St Joseph & The English Martyr <bishopsstortford@rcdow.org.uk>

 2 attachments (30 KB)

The First Sunday of Advent - Fr Antonio.docx; Christmas Masses from Fr Peter.docx;

Good afternoon

Please find attached the Sunday message from Fr Antonio on this the first week of Advent and the beginning of the liturgical year. This message can also be found on the news section of our 'New' website which we launch today!

Thank you very much to Fr Antonio (Our wonderful 'I-Priest Extraordinaire') who has done a fantastic job. The 'old' website is still working and contains information, but will not be kept primed with up-to-date news or events. There will be a link on the 'old website' which will direct you to the new one, just in case you are unable to find it.

The new website address is www.rcstortford.org.uk Please do have a look and let us know your thoughts, if there is anything which you would like to see on there or if you have any suggestions. We already have a Twitter account @rcstortford but now also have a facebook account, so please visit those too.

There is also a **very important** notice from Fr Peter attached relating to the provision of the Christmas Masses this year. Please take some time to read it as this year there will be a ' ballot' sytem as because of the restrictions, we are only permitted to allow entry to a limited number of people to St Joseph's. The Christmas ballot opens today 27th November, online <https://rcstortford.org.uk/ballot/> and via the telephone (Mon- Fri 9am-3pm) and will close on Wednesday 9th December at midday. The ballot will be drawn on Thursday 10th December and those who have been successful will be told by telephone or email on Friday 11th December. A special ticket will be sent, which will have to be produced to allow entry. All of our Masses will continue to be live streamed. Regrettably there will be no Christmas Mass at Holy Cross or Most Holy Redeemer this year

This week I attended the ' Sycamore Advent course' kindly hosted by the Dad's group, via Zoom. It was really well supported by the parish and huge thanks to David and John who facilitated the session. I really enjoyed it, so thank you! It can often be a little bit out of our comfort zone to join in with some things, but, I have always found that it is worth plucking up the courage and taking a chance, so if you missed out, you can join again this week for the next session or catch up with one of the videos , the link of which can be found further down this newsletter. It was great to meet new people in our 'break out' rooms and discuss 'Happiness'. Listening to what makes people happy was actually really nice, reminiscing about all sorts of things from sweets in our childhood to the 'freedom' of losing a mobile phone, belonging to a community, the love of our family and our faith. Being happy has not been easy for everyone this year, with the loss of loved ones, restrictions on who we see, where we go, how we worship, not having enough food, money or a job. Mental health has also been affected. But, despite this, there have also been moments of happiness with acts of kindness, togetherness and a renewed sense of faith, family and friendship. Neighbours have waved, clapped and spoken with each other perhaps even for the first time and communities have come together to support each other as one.

Music has always been a huge part of making people happy and cheering the mood. It has been wonderful to have our Choir and Music group back in St Joseph's, albeit socially distanced and we have received some lovely messages from those watching the livestreaming about how nice the music sounded and good it made people feel. The other day I revisited the wonderful youtube clip of the Most Holy Redeemer virtual choir singing earlier in the year, not forgetting their fabulous rendition of ' Carlos, Carlos!' Listening to music releases

mood enhancing chemicals (I believe that chocolate does work too!!) There are many happy and 'feel good' songs and music which get us all going, whether it be tapping our feet or humming along. As a teenager I used to love listening to the ' Top 40' on the radio on a Sunday evening recalling the feeling of anticipation, waiting to see which Pop group would be number one and talking to my friends at school about it the following day. Probably like many of my age group, I used to have a radio cassette tape player, on which I would try to record the music, without the presenter speaking(!) pressing down two buttons at a time and trying to time it just right. I actually received an electric shock one day upon trying to record, ' Kid Creole and the Coconuts' which probably served me right, having spent a good ten minutes with my fingers fiddling to rescue a trapped, spooling cassette from the inners of the machine and then using a pencil trying to rewind it...

UPDATE RE THE NEW LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS

Unfortunately, due to the further COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown, we are **no longer able to gather for public worship from Thursday 5th November until 2nd December 2020** however... not long to wait now !!

In the meantime, Fr Peter and Fr Antonio Mass will continue to celebrate a daily and weekend Parish Mass at St Joseph's behind 'closed doors' albeit without a physical congregation being present. Mass will be live streamed on <http://www.churchservices.tv/bishopsstortford> so please do join us ' virtually'. **Regrettably Mass will not be celebrated at Holy Cross or Most Holy Redeemer.**

MASS TIMES AT ST JOSEPH'S VIA THE LIVESTREAMING

Monday- Friday Mass will be broadcast live at 9.30am

Saturday Vigil Mass will be broadcast live at 6pm

Sunday Mass will be broadcast live at 9am and at 11am with music and Cantor.

All of the Masses will be recorded and can be viewed at any time after the time of broadcast.

We have opened St Joseph and the English Martyrs Catholic Church and Holy Cross for private prayer, **until we are able to open our Churches again for Mass.**

A Steward/s will be in attendance to ensure that our Churches continue to remain COVID secure. Please observe the social distancing measures in place, using hand sanitiser and wearing a face covering (unless exempt) when visiting the Church. We ask you to respect also the capacity limits of 38 individual persons from separate households at any one time at St Josephs and 32 persons at Holy Cross. **Our track and trace measures will continue, but there is no requirement to book a place for private prayer at this time.** We have a QR Code on display already for those with a phone app or we will politely ask for your name and contact details upon arrival, so that individuals can be notified in the event of any suspected Covid-19 case.

Your details will be securely kept for 21 days to enable us to provide details to the trace & test system should an outbreak occur.

Full details of the Privacy Notice can be found at <http://www.rcdow.org.uk/privacy-policy>.

PRIVATE PRAYER TIME AT HOLY CROSS (Thank you to everyone who has helped to Steward and Clean!)

Sunday 29th November between 2pm – 4pm

PRIVATE PRAYER TIME AT ST JOSEPH'S

Monday 30th November- 10am -10.30am

Tuesday 1st December - 8am-9am

Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church is NOT open for private prayer currently

Thank you for your continued patience, prayers and understanding at this time.

BOOKING FOR WEEKDAY AND WEEKEND MASS - From Wednesday 2nd December 2020 we are once again permitted to celebrate Mass together! Our previous 'Booking system' will revert and can be found on our new website under the 'Events' section. Up to 2 seats can be booked on line. <https://rcstortford.org.uk/events/>
All other bookings are to be made via the Parish office please.

PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS - the family and friends of Ruth Read RIP who sadly died recently. Ruth was a former much loved member of our Choir at St Joseph's.
Eternal rest grant unto Ruth O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen

SYCAMORE ADVENT COURSE- A Catholic Formation 'Advent Course'. A 4-week course starting on Wednesday November 25th at 7:30pm

Session 1: THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS -

If anyone couldn't make it, or missed some of the session, or would just like to watch the session's video again, the link to the video is below:

<https://www.sycamore.fm/videos/session-1-the-search-for-happiness/>

Session 2: A GOD WHO SPEAKS?

Wednesday 2nd December, 7:30pm

Session 3: THE BIBLE

Wednesday 9th December, 7:30pm

Session 4: THE POWER OF PRAYER

Wednesday 16th December, 7:30pm

If you are interested in attending the course, please contact: John Wright (johncharles.wright70@gmail.com) or David Wilkinson (wilkinsondavid@mac.com) or the Parish Office to register and get the Zoom login details.

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMISSIONS 2021-22 - If your child was born between 1st September 2016 and 31st August 2017, you can apply for a Primary School place to start in September 2021. The application process opens **2nd November 2020** and closes on the **15th January 2021**.

CERTIFICATE OF CATHOLIC PRACTICE- Applicants for St Joseph's School for RECEPTION places in 2021/22 should download an application for a Certificate of Catholic Practice which can be found on our Parish website. Once completed it should then be posted through the letter box of No 3 Windhill marked

for Fr Peter's attention **with a stamped addressed envelope please**. The Certificate will then be posted to you. No personal collection of the certificate is permitted. The School deadline is 15/1/2021

ZOOM - Our 9am Sunday Zoom session still continues this week. Izzy will be kindly singing from 8.45am and then from this Sunday again we hope there will be music streamed live from the Church during the Mass. Thank you to everyone who still continues to generously give their time and talents to make this happen each week. Thank you to Dom and Dave who played again last week - lovely to have you back!

Topic: Family Mass via Zoom during lock-down (music starting at 8:45am)

Time: November 29 2020 08:30 AM London

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89508074176>

Meeting ID: 895 0807 4176

Link to Calendar invite is parishioners want to add it to their diary.

One tap mobile:

+442030512874,,89508074176# United Kingdom

Dial-in by phone:

0203 051 2874

The numbers are standard rate numbers (not free unless you have inclusive minutes), but they are not premium numbers.

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSE NEWSPAPER -are offering a 1 yearly digital subscription for £20. Visit their website for more information

<https://thecatholicuniverse.com/>

REDEMPTORIST PUBLICATION ADVENT EXTRA MAGAZINE - The distribution of the Advent Extra magazine cannot be sold from Churches this year. Copies can be bought from Redemptorist Publication online.

CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S SOCIETY CHRISTMAS GIFT APPEAL - Each December our Supporters generously donate food and Christmas gifts which we distribute to disadvantaged families. This year we would be very grateful if you could donate gift vouchers instead. This will ensure we can continue to provide this vital support for children who would otherwise go without at Christmas. www.cathchild.org.uk

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD - Operation Christmas Child is a project of Samaritan's Purse, a Christian international relief organisation. Our mission is to provide local partners around the world with shoeboxes filled with small toys, hygiene items, and school supplies as a means of reaching out to children in their own communities with the Good News of Jesus Christ. We ship these simple gifts outside the United Kingdom to children affected by war, poverty, natural disaster, famine, and disease.

<https://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child>

This year, alternatively, you can pack and pay for an 'online shoebox' via the Samaritans purse web site and they will fill it on your behalf.

FOOD BANK REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR - I'm sure many of you will have heard about a 'reverse advent calendar' – where you donate an item to a charity or a Foodbank in the lead up to Christmas. This is something the Food bank are really excited about doing...however they are going to start this from 1st November.

There are a few reasons for this...

1. If you collect all your wonderful donations throughout December and then come to donate to them on Christmas Eve...they won't be there and they wouldn't want all your hard work to go to waste.
2. They actually need your donations at the beginning of December, allowing time to sort, organise and donate them to who they need to go to.

So, with this in mind, they have put together a plan for November! This is just to give you a rough idea of the kind of items that they would love to receive. You do not need to stick to this list at all. So, grab a box and each day over the next month see if you can fill it with 24 items. See our web site for more details or visit the Foodbank Facebook page.

They will be putting a reminder out every day of what could be put in the Reverse Advent Calendar on their Facebook page <https://m.facebook.com/bsfoodbank/photos/a.1322254567921267/2361008490712531/?type=3&source=57>

CLEANING VACANCY- ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School are looking for cleaners to join their team in January 2021, 7.00am to 9.00am and/or 3.30pm to 5.30pm weekdays, term time only with possible overtime during school holidays. Please contact Nicola McManus 01279 652576 sbmanager@stjosephs207.herts.sch.uk for an application form.

The school is committed to safeguarding children and young people. All post holders are subject to a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and two satisfactory references.

PARISH E- CHRISTMAS CARDS - Research shows that the UK spent over £200 million on Christmas Cards in 2018, which is higher than anywhere in the world. Once Christmas is over, one billion of those cards end up in landfill because they can't be recycled. This year, we're inviting everyone to help the environment by sending e-cards and consider donating the money they save to the parish instead. We have 6 different designs as 'Parish E- Christmas cards' which are now available on line. Thank you to our creatives, Fr Peter, Mike Carroll, Martin Curran and Monica Jacobs for kindly donating their creations and to Fr Antonio and Sophie Sullivan for helping to choose the final 6 cards.

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/RCStortfordChristmasCards>

CHRISTMAS IN A BAG - Most Holy Redeemer have donated £200 and along with the local Churches of Sawbridgeworth and High Wych have joined together to make and give away a special gift for local people in supporting 'Christmas in a bag'. Christmas in a bag contains a selection of treats from chocolates to decorations aimed at making Christmas that little bit more special. If you know someone that would appreciate a bag, or would you like one please contact office@secchurch.org.uk or call 07549 006 777. If you can donate any mince pies, biscuits, Jaffa cakes, chocolate oranges, crackers, decorations etc., please deliver them to the Congregational Church, London road CM21 9EH 1.30pm - 3pm 30th November to 4th December

JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM -Holy Cross is exploring the possibility of having a virtual Journey to Bethlehem for younger children in the run up to Christmas - further details to follow.

THY KINGDOM COME- PRAYER FOR THE NATION -

<https://www.thykingdomcome.global/sites/default/files/2020-11/PftN%20Booklet.pdf>

Throughout the month, Christians are encouraged to pray daily for a specific area of national concern, wherever they are, culminating into a collective moment of prayer at 6pm each evening, with cathedrals and churches across the country invited to ring a bell at this time.

Christians are encouraged to follow a simple seven-day prayer cycle, praying for a specific area each day including the NHS and frontline workers, the bereaved, and those struggling with physical and mental ill-health, and for children and young people. Prayers and other resources will be shared on social media with the hashtag #PrayerForTheNation.

THE GIVING TREE 2020 - as with previous years we are supporting the St Francis Family Centre in Poplar, East London. Due to the current restrictions, an online 'Wishlist' with Amazon is available on https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/1JAV7LGOSOR8N?ref_=wl_share

Once on the wish list, please choose your gift, add to basket and head to the checkout in the usual way. When choosing your delivery address please choose Giving Tree Margaret Wilkinson's Gift Registry address. Thank you very much!

THANK YOU - to Yvonne Fordyce for sharing a lovely prayer from the Advent Extra this week written by Fr Denis Mc Bride -

We are a community of memory that looks back;
we are a community of Spirit that looks forward.
it's important, though not easy,
to look back with kindness, and to look forward in hope.
this year is closing down
and a new year beckons.
Let us hand over the past to God
for his healing blessing.
Let us ask the Lord to fae the future with us
becuase we do not want to face it alone.
Let us pray for each other,
and for all those we love and cherish:
that each one might know the promise of the Lord
that brings the Gospel to a close:
'Know this, I will be with you even unto the end of the world'

PARISHIONERS OF THE WEEK - This week, the award has to go to the very lovely Anne Asser, who usually looks after the Repostory at St Joseph's (currently closed because of the restrictions). During the lockdown, Anne has kept really busy, walking (hundreds of miles!), knitting (lots!) and in constant contact with other parishioners. Anne is very caring, kind, generous and always happy, with a kind word for others. She gives a huge amount of her time to the parish and has done for many years. Thank you Anne, you're an amazing lady and loved by us all! x

To finish this week, I found a musical quote which just caught my eye and made me smile...

' God is a DJ, Life is a dance floor, Love is the rhythm and You are the music'

I hope that you all have a very happy and healthy week

Best wishes
Debbie

Parish Administrator

(Mon- Fri 9am - 3pm)

Catholic Parish of Bishop's Stortford

*St Joseph and the English Martyrs, Bishop's Stortford
Holy Cross, at St Andrew's, Church Lane, Much Hadham
Most Holy Redeemer, Sayesbury Road, Sawbridgeworth*

3 Windhill, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 2ND
Telephone: 01279 654063

email: bishopsstortford@rcdow.org.uk

<http://parish.rcdow.org.uk/bishopsstortford/>

Follow our Live streaming on www.churchservices.tv/bishopsstortford