

Sunday Message on the Second Sunday of Advent from Fr Peter

The opening prayer (Collect) of this Sunday's Mass sets the scene: "...may no earthly undertaking hinder those who set out in haste to meet your Son, but may our learning of heavenly wisdom, gain us admittance to his company".

It set me to thinking what heavenly wisdom do I need most. ...and that is quite a tough question. I suppose patience is an important one for me and also the need not to see myself as the centre of my world, a danger we can all fall into very easily; "my needs", "my rights" which is another way of saying, "my pride". Most of us do not like change at all, but it is a part of our lives if we are to grow and mature as St John Henry Newman reminds us.

One of the themes of the pontificate of Pope Emeritus, Benedict, was that of 'relativism' – simply put, it is the danger of placing oneself, and only oneself, at the centre of things. Everything is judged as it relates to me and my needs and feelings. That is the opposite of the message that we see lying in the Christmas Crib - a defenceless and dependent baby. We are a part of the world in which we live, we are called upon to relate to and consider all those around us. As we pray so often, "thy will, not mine be done".

So it can be an openness to others and their needs that will help us on our journey towards heavenly wisdom, so, pray for each other on that journey this week.

Fr Peter

Friday Note 4 December 2020 and the Sunday Message from Fr Peter on Second Sunday of Advent

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

Fri 12/4/2020 5:11 PM

 1 attachments (15 KB)

Sunday Message on the Second Sunday of Advent from Fr Peter.docx;

Good afternoon

Please find attached the Sunday message from Fr Peter on this the second Sunday of Advent which can also be found on our new website www.rcstortford.org.uk

Thank you very much indeed for your encouraging feedback on the website which has been really welcome. Fr Antonio has worked very hard indeed and every comment received has been carefully considered and where further improvements and tweaks can be made this has already been done. We do have a post on the website showing exactly what feedback issues have been resolved to date, but please do let us know if there is something else which you would like to see if this would be helpful.

Well, this week, as Michael Bubble sang, 'It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas' .. with only 20 sleeps to go, the shops now back open and selling their wares, Christmas music playing over sound systems and houses competitively adorned with flashing lights and a variety of dubious inflatable creations bringing many a smile. Some decorations have already been put up early to bring much needed festive cheer in a year which has been very stressful and distressing for so many to say the least. With the country still in a tiered system, politicians debating over the calorific value of a scotch egg, restrictions on our private lives and uncertainty ahead, it is understandable that some people are feeling a little fatigued as we continue to make the necessary sacrifices to ensure that we keep everyone safe.

With many new rules and restrictions governing our health and safety, one area of current concern is our Christmas Crib. Although there are a few weeks to go before Christmas, we need to start planning now with a thorough risk assessment to ensure our crib is COVID-secure.

Here is some helpful guidance courtesy of the Diocese of Portsmouth:

1. A maximum of 4 Shepherds only are permitted in the Crib.
2. Shepherds must wear facemasks (unless exempt) and strictly observe social distancing (2m or 1m+ with mitigations).
3. Jesus, Mary and Joseph form a family bubble and thus may be placed together.
4. The Ox and the Ass need Declaration of Non-Contamination Certificates, obtainable from the Department of Agriculture.
5. The Three Wise Men, since they come from a non-Schengen Area, will be subject to a 14-day quarantine, whether or not they have tested negative for Covid.
6. The straw, moss, palm branches and other decorations must be disinfected, with hands washed for 20 seconds after handling.
7. Angels flying over the crib are now forbidden, owing to the aerosol effect produced by the batting of wings.
8. Shepherds are permitted provided they are not more than 70 years old or suffering from underlying medical conditions or in another vulnerable category.

9. The Inn, along with other businesses in the hospitality sector, is closed until further notice.

10. For 2020 only, a Pontius Pilate should be added to the Crib to explain to authorised participants the protocols for washing and sanitisation of hands.....

When I first read this message.. it very nearly got me too !!

BOOKING FOR WEEKDAY AND WEEKEND MASS - 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 (Mon-Fri 9am-3pm)

CHRISTMAS MASS BALLOT - As advised last week our Christmas Mass ballot opened 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.

SYCAMORE ADVENT COURSE- A Catholic Formation ' Advent Course '. A 4-week course which started on Wednesday November 25th at 7:30pm but which you can still join.

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. Everyone is welcome!

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 the 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 for those unable to attend Mass. Izzy will be kindly singing from 8.45am. 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.

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

Time: December 6 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.

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

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>

JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM -Holy Cross will be hosting an ecumenical 'Journey to Bethlehem Childrens service' in line with government guidelines, followed by fun craft, led by Revd Steve Bate and Fr Peter on Sunday 13 December 2020 at 3pm.

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 CARDINAL HUME CENTRE - Please can you help to support the Cardinal Hume Centre in 'The Big Give' Christmas Challenge. From midday on Tuesday 1st December to midday Tuesday 8th December any amount up to £5,000 donated will be doubled, thanks to a generous pledge from The Childhood Trust and other donors, until the Centre reaches our £50,000 goal. It is an ambitious target to raise £50k but will result in £100,000 towards the Centre's work, at such a critical time. Payment must be by card via a specific link. To donate you need to go to <https://donate.thebiggive.org.uk/campaign/a051r00001eq7TZAAY> and you should be directed to a donate button.

Please visit <https://www.cardinalhumecentre.org.uk/> for more information about the good work achieved by the Cardinal Hume Centre.

PARISHIONERS OF THE WEEK - This week, the Dad's group have continued to lead the way forward in kindly hosting the Sycamore Advent course, which if you have not joined yet, please consider doing so. Each week they all selflessly and generously give their time and technical Zoom wizardry to make a really positive difference to others in our parish. Thank you Chaps-you're all brilliant! A big shout out to David and John who hosted this week.

We are very blessed that there is still much kindness and generosity in abundance in our parish. This has also been shown this week by parishioners from our three churches who have come together socially distanced of course to give their time and talent to help to create a special Christmas message, complete with wonderful carols and readings which has been beautifully filmed and directed by Sophie. We hope that once edited, it will be released on our website ready for Christmas Eve. Thank you to everyone who helped to make this possible.

To finish this week a simple quote.. ' May peace be always on our lips and in our hearts'.

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

Parish Website: <https://www.rcstortford.org.uk>

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