

The Sunday Message on the Third Sunday of Advent from Fr Antonio

The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally called Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete is Latin for "Rejoice". Gaudete Sunday is the mid-point of Advent and it signifies the growing nearness of Christmas Day. This anticipation of Christmas should of course focus on Jesus who is the true source of joy (hence Rejoice Sunday). But what do we mean by joy? We can derive joy from material things: when we buy a new car or move into a new house. We can be joyous when we go on holiday or start a better paid job. But according to St Paul, joy is one of the fruits of life rooted in the Spirit. We find true joy from three sources. First, from going beyond selfishness as it is in giving that we receive. Second, from appreciation of all the goodness and beauty around us (i.e., God's creation). Third, and most importantly, from our belief in God whose love is manifested in so many ways.

We can also take joy from who we are. One of the ways God manifests His love is in creating us in his own image. There is good in all his creation, most especially us. To recognise this good, we need to love ourselves as God created us. Jesus says "I am .." seven times in John's Gospel. John the Baptist says "I am not ..." three times. He is not Christ, not Elijah nor the prophet promised in the time of Moses. Like John, it is good to know and accept our limitations. It does away with the pressure of pretence and role playing. John was enthusiastic in his ministry but had the humility to know when he had to step back from the limelight. He was the voice at the service of the Word. Like John, there are things we can do well but we must also recognise our limitations ... and rejoice when it's others' turn to use their talents for the glory of God.

Fr Antonio

Parish Note Friday 11th December 2020 and the Sunday Message on the Third Sunday of Advent from Fr Antonio

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

Fri 12/11/2020 5:39 PM

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

 1 attachments (14 KB)

The Sunday Message on the third Sunday of Advent from Fr Antonio.docx;

Good afternoon

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

This week, after performing my daily mopping duty of the church, I walked out of the side door of St Joseph's wearing my blue surgical gloves and face mask, with glasses all steamed up, carrying a double wrapped bag ready for the bin, when I came across a very unexpected visitor. This 'unmasked hoodlum' was racing at full speed up 'Cardinal's walk' towards me in complete contravention of the one-way system! I immediately stopped in my tracks and then, so did he, as we faced each other in a momentary standoff staring competition. Resembling a giant cyclops with only one good eye not being fogged up, I slowly reached into my pocket for my phone and then gasped. The visitor, to my surprise, was the most adorable, rotund, little field mouse that I have ever seen, with the cutest whiskers and shiniest eyes. He tried desperately to climb up the side of the step by the door, but as he was a bit on the plump side, had a few issues with his grasp, his little pink fingers not quite strong enough to pull himself up and over and so kept rolling off. After a few comical attempts, he managed to climb onto a small pile of leaves wedged in the corner and eventually hauled himself up and after a bit of a breather, scurried off under the gap in the gate onto Windhill. The whole episode, which I managed to film, was a little surreal, with my being glad that I hadn't trodden on him a few seconds later as I exited the door!

It got me thinking about how many times, mice are associated with churches. I remember a poem by John Betjeman, 'Diary of a Church mouse' and apparently one of the earliest phrases, 'As poor as a Church mouse' was first recorded in 'The Royalist', a comedy (1682), by the English author Thomas D'Urfey. The phrase is said to be derived from the fact that church buildings don't store or provide food and therefore mice in such buildings were utterly destitute. This little mouse however actually seemed to be doing ok ..

BOOKING FOR WEEKDAY AND WEEKEND MASS - We are once again permitted to celebrate Mass together. Our previous 'Booking system' has reverted 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). Bookings are released usually 10 days in advance. If the web site shows that Bookings are 'closed', it does not mean that there are not any seats left, it means that the booking is not yet 'open'. When there are no seats left, it states, 'Booking full'.

CHRISTMAS MASS BALLOT - The ballot was independently drawn in a very fair way yesterday morning and all available seats have now been allocated. Tickets will be sent out in due course. The number of Parishioners applying for Mass outweighed the limited number of places that we have available in the Church under the current Government restrictions. We know that those of you who were not successful in the ballot will be very disappointed. We too are saddened that we are not able to accommodate you this year, along with the large number of fellow parishioners and visitors that we are used to having at Christmas time. For those who have been allocated a place, if for any reason you are not able to attend, please do let us know as soon as possible so that your place/s can be reallocated to another parishioner.

Please remember that all four Masses, (Christmas 'eve 5pm and 7pm, Christmas Day 9am and 11am) will also be live streamed.

There will also be a special streaming only Midnight Mass at midnight too.

St Joseph's will be open on Christmas 'eve from 10am till 4pm and everyone will be most welcome to come, pray quietly and to visit the Crib with their family .

There will be a Mass on Saturday 26 December at 10am at St Joseph's with a 9am Mass on Sunday 27th and a 5pm Mass at Holy Cross for which booking will be available 10 days before via our website as usual.

This has been an extraordinary year and one that we could never have expected. Please God, this time next year, we will be able, once again, to gather together as we have always done before. Thank you for your understanding.

SYCAMORE ADVENT COURSE- A Catholic Formation 'Advent Course'. The last session of the 4-week Zoom course is this week, but you can still join in! A Big thank you to Dom who was the session leader last week.

Session 4: THE POWER OF PRAYER

Wednesday 16th December, 7:30pm

If you are interested in attending the last session of 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 with singing from 8.45am. Thank you to everyone who still continues to generously give their time and talents to make this happen each week.

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

Time: December 13 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.

BIG BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS to John who celebrates his second 25th Birthday this weekend! Hope that you have a wonderful time with your family.

PARISH E- CHRISTMAS CARDS - 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. We would like to raise £100 and have £15 so far. Please do take a look!

<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 this Sunday 13 December 2020 at 3pm.Thank you to everyone involved.

ADVENT PRAYERS - Thank you to Martin Dillon for leading the prayers last Tuesday. There will be another session this Tuesday 15 December via Zoom led by Mark Stephens. If you would like to join in, please contact Martin Dillon via email: manddillon123@btinternet.com to request the Zoom invitation code or alternatively the parish office (Mon-Fri 9am-3pm).

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.

SEPTEMBER 2020 BIKE AND HIKE RESULTS - The Beds and Herts Bike and Hike organisers are very pleased that they decided to go ahead with last September's Bike and Hike Event as it raised over £109,000 (2019 - £95,000). This is nearly a record. The Trust Treasurer has set in place the return of half of each churches' sponsorship monies to their own bank accounts. The Trustees, at their latest virtual meeting, have already allocated funds to churches and chapels who requested help for repairs etc.

Thank you to all the churches and chapels in the Bishop's Stortford / Sawbridgeworth area who contributed to the day either by participating or sponsoring this worthwhile event. I'm sure churches will welcome all contributions to their bank accounts at this difficult time. Special thanks to Bill O'Neill, St. Andrew's, Much Hadham (£2,322, Gold Certificate)

ST JOSEPH'S SCHOOL - have to raise £100k towards the new school building and need your help please!! The first fundraising activity that we would like to introduce to you is our 'Buy a Brick' Campaign.

We would love to replicate a miniature new school building out of Lego pieces for the children in the school to see. In order for this to help with raising funds for our school, each piece of Lego will cost £5 and children can purchase these through our school Virgin Money Page:

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/finalCharityHomepage.action?char-ityId=1008573>

For every £5 donated, your child will be adding a 2x4 (8 blob) Lego piece to the miniature new school building.

To donate:

Step 1: Log on to our Virgin Money Page - Type in 'St. Joseph's School Association Bishop's Stortford' in the search bar.

Step 2: Click on 'Campaigns' on the left-hand side of the Homepage Step 3: Donate £5 for each Lego block

Step 4: Leave your surname as confirmation of your donation Step 5: Your child/children will be provided with the Lego by the school.

We do understand that we are going through some unprecedented times, so always, we thank you for your continued support. Your contributions will help not only benefit your children, but also many children that will pass through St. Josephs in the future.

PARISHIONERS OF THE WEEK - This week, a huge thank you to all of those in our parish who have continued to help to keep our churches open this year by stewarding, cleaning, sweeping, mopping, fogging, wiping, scrubbing and sanitising. Giving your time, energy and effort to ensure that everyone is kept safe has been of paramount importance. Thank you SO much!

To finish this week, I was told of a lovely Christmas card message sent by a past parishioner and kindly shared by Alison Jones, which said..

"I've felt closer to you this year because I've been virtually "going to Mass" at St Joseph's, so I've found myself thinking about you all x"

So lovely to think that old friends are gathered around the altar too, especially when we can't all be together...

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

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

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

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