

The Sunday Message from Fr Peter on the First Sunday of Advent

Well, it has come upon us at last!! The First Sunday of Advent..... I can't really quite believe it but my calendar says it clearly so it must be true. Where have all the months gone.... I really do not know!

So, where do we begin? I think the key for me is in the Gospel where Jesus says "Stay Awake!", as simple as that. But I hear you say, what sort of staying awake is He talking about? Is it not dozing off, staying alert, listening with a careful ear, recognising signs...all sorts of possibilities!



I think being awake means having all our senses working together so that we get a full picture of what is happening around us. All five senses need to be engaged: to hear the presence of God, for instance in the poor; to feel God touching our hearts as well as our bodies; to see the presence of God, perhaps in His creation around us; to smell the sheep of God's flock as Pope Francis encourages us to do; to taste the flavour of goodness and kindness in all that we do.

OK then, that is a timetable for the four Sundays of Advent and we can keep the last one, 'taste' for Christmas Day itself!

Happy Advent.

Fr Peter

Parish Note Friday 26 November 2021 and the Sunday Message from Fr Peter on the First Sunday of Advent

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

Fri 11/26/2021 3:20 PM

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

Good afternoon

Please find attached the Sunday Message from Fr Peter on the First Sunday of Advent which can also be found on our website.

Advent is a special season in the Church's year when we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ. However, for many people experiencing food poverty, Christmas can be a difficult time. Food insecurity has increased by 250% during the pandemic, and last year, 8.4 million people in the U.K. regularly did not get enough to eat.

As you may already be aware, the Bishop's Stortford Foodbank for the past couple of years has run a 'Reverse Advent calendar' during which time you collect daily items listed, place into a box and then deliver the food parcel to the Foodbank. Today was the first drop off day and there are three more to go with Monday 6th December being the last drop off for completed boxes. It is not too late to get involved if you would like to help. Regular Food donations are of course positively welcomed and can be dropped off at the crates in the local supermarkets and monetary donations are gratefully received too, either online or by sending a cheque directly to the foodbank. Please visit their website for more information. Thank you very much!

<https://www.bishopsstortfordfoodbank.com/>

OUR WEBSITE HAS TURNED PURPLE! - There's a new section on our website that's all about Advent. Why do we celebrate it and what do all the things we associate with it symbolise? There's a list of "28 Ways to Prepare for Christmas", just one of the host of recommended resources to make the weeks leading up to the Big Day more meaningful. The section will be updated throughout the Advent season with new resources so do visit regularly. You'll find it here: <https://rcstortford.org.uk/advent2021>

HONOURING SUNDAY -During the pandemic, public worship was suspended for a time and there have been restrictions on parish life. As a result, people have been exploring other ways to practice their faith including Spiritual Communion via live streaming. As people begin returning to more regular patterns of parish life, the bishops of England and Wales have issued the following statement about the importance of honouring Sunday. <https://rcstortford.org.uk/2021/11/19/bishops-statement-honouring-sunday/>

An extract from the Bishop's Conference. *'The Sunday Eucharist is a gift; as God's holy people we are called to praise and thank God in the most sublime way possible. When the Church speaks of the Sunday obligation, it reminds us that attending Mass is a personal response to the selfless offering of Christ's love.'*

'At this time, we recognise that for some people there may be certain factors which hinder attendance at Sunday Mass. The pandemic is clearly not over. The risk of infection is still present. For some, there is legitimate fear in gathering together. As your bishops, we recognise that these prevailing circumstances suggest that not everyone is yet in the position to fulfil the absolute duty to attend freely Sunday Mass.'

SYNOD 2023: The time has come to participate!

What is it?

The synod is in response to Pope Francis' call for us to become a "synodal Church"; in other words, a Church which journeys together. A synod is a council of the Church normally convened for us to think and pray together on an issue of doctrine, administration or application. According to the synod handbook, this

particular synod is “an opportunity for the entire people of God to discern together how to move forward on the path towards being a more synodal church in the long-term”. In the first stage, we are called to reflect together as a parish on how to renew our sense of mission in the light of eighteen months’ experience of pandemic.

For more information on the synod, there is a special page on our website: <https://rcstortford.org.uk/synod2023/>

How do I participate?

Everyone is encouraged to participate, whether you are a regular church-goer nor not, a Christian or of no faith at all. There are two ways of participating:

Complete the questionnaire. If you were not able to attend the Listening Events, you are invited to complete a short questionnaire, Share Your Thoughts. This is attached, and it can also be filled in online: <https://rcstortford.org.uk/synod2023/share-your-thoughts/> or hard copies can be found at the back of the church. Please ensure you return/submit the completed questionnaire by 30 November.

Your feedback, both from the Listening Meetings and the questionnaire, will be submitted to the diocese. They, in turn, will collect feedback from all parishes which will be put together in a document and sent to Rome for the synod taking place in October 2023.

PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS - the family and friends of Arturo Oliva Pulin RIP who sadly passed away at the Hargrave House Care Home in Stansted last Monday (aged 93). Arturo was well known in the parish, along with his late wife Peggy, having worshipped at St Joseph’s for around 35 years until he moved to Stansted. His funeral mass is being held at St Theresa’s in Stansted on Monday, 2nd December.

Eternal rest grant unto Arturo O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen

HELP THE SVP -The SVP are distributing **11,500 Vinnie Packs** containing cold weather essentials to the homeless this winter. Please could you consider sponsoring packs at a suggested donation of £3.70 per pack? Donations can be sent to **Vinnie Packs, PO Box 72264, London SW1P 9EZ** with cheques made out to SVP or by bank transfer to Nat West **sort code 60-60-04, account no. 4608 8237** . Thank you so much for your support.

BAPTISM PREPARATION COURSE - We are pleased to advise you that Sophie Sullivan, our Catechetical Coordinator and her husband Mike shall be running the next two-part Baptism preparation course on the dates below via Zoom. The places will be limited to a maximum of 10 couples on each.

Monday 10th and Monday 17th January 2022 at 8pm - 9.15pm

If you would like to attend this course, please contact the parish office as soon as possible, so that we can send you an invitation in plenty of time. You are requested to attend the course prior to your Child being baptised. If you have not yet completed a Baptism application form, please contact the office so that we can send you one for completion so that we have your details on file.

THE UNIVERSE CATHOLIC WEEKLY - is thrilled to announce that we have launched our new online newspaper with the full support of our first subscriber none other than His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols. Order your Digital copy by going to www.universecatholicweekly.co.uk or call us on 0743661 7650 and ask for Michelle. Special offer: Only £20 for 3 months.

AFGHAN REFUGEE SUPPORT -Thank you very much to everyone who kindly donated last week. We have gift aid forms and envelopes at the back of the Church if you would still like to support this cause.

ADMISSION TO ST JOSEPH'S ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL RECEPTION - The application process for admission to **Reception Class** at St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School for children born between 1st September 2017 and 31st August 2018 will open on 1st November 2021 and close on 15th January 2022.

School application forms will be available on St. Joseph's School website from 1st November. They must be completed with the necessary documentation and returned to the school by 15th January 2022.

In addition to the school forms, you **MUST** complete the online Hertfordshire County Council application form (or your local authority if not Hertfordshire) - see www.hertsdirect.org
For more information, please see the school website: www.stjosephs207.herts.sch.uk

CERTIFICATE OF CATHOLIC PRACTICE - Applicants for St Joseph's School for **RECEPTION** places in 2022 should collect a white 'embossed' application form for a certificate from No 3 Windhill, the Sacristy after Mass or the Parish Office in person. Once completed it should then be posted through the letter box of No 3 Windhill marked for Fr Antonio's attention **with a stamped addressed envelope, please**. The Certificate will then be posted to you. The School deadline is 15/1/2022.

CONFIRMATION GROUP 2021/22 - Bishop Paul has allocated us a date for the Confirmation Masses - **Saturday 16th July at 11am and 2pm**. Please put this important date in your diaries!

SYCAMORE ADVENT COURSE - The Dad's Group and the Catenians are delighted to invite you to a Sycamore Advent Course.
Sycamore is a fabulous resource produced by the Westminster Diocese. We will be facilitating an Advent journey over four sessions using Zoom:

30 Nov: The Gift of Faith - Hope

7 Dec: Finding True Freedom - Peace

14 Dec: The Community of the Church - Joy

21 Dec: The Light of Christ - Love

Each session consists of a brief welcome and introduction, three short video clips linked to the session theme and a chance for small group discussion on each clip.

All sessions start at 7:30pm and will be complete by 9:00pm.

We look forward to seeing you during Advent! **Any questions, contact John Wright (07739 789169)**

Zoom Meeting Details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89576068767?pwd=SWVWVURITmV2V3NWOXBuOGNNYXdYUT09>

ADVENT RETREAT FOR YOUNG ADULTS (18-30s) with the Assumption Sisters on Saturday 4th December 2021 in Kensington. Young people are invited for a day retreat (10am-5pm) to prepare for Christmas, with teaching, workshops, prayer, confessions and mass. Venue: Milleret House, 23 Kensington Square W8 5HN. Donations only. Register: tramy@assumptionreligious.org

THE GIVING TREE - is our annual charitable present-giving endeavour to support children of the St Francis Family Centre in Poplar, East London. The area has the highest rate of child poverty in the country, more than double the national average. Many of the families we work with live in crowded and dilapidated accommodation and struggle to afford basic essentials for their children. The family centre works in partnership with parents to provide outstanding pre-school education, giving disadvantaged children the best possible start in life. Presents and Hampers at Christmas complement the services the family centre provides and brings a good dose of Christmas cheer! This year, following the success of last year's collection, we have set up an online [Wishlist with Amazon](#). The advantage of this means that the Centre can receive the gifts directly and we can keep the process Covid-secure. Gifts need to be received by the Centre by Friday 10

December, so please order your gift to arrive by then. Thursday 9 December would be the last day for Prime deliveries please! We are sending the gifts directly to the St Francis centre so you must click on ' Other Addresses' and choose the Giving Tree 2021 gift registry address. Please visit our website for full instructions. <https://rcstortford.org.uk/2021/11/18/support-the-giving-tree-2021/>

And finally, a word of thanks, in advance, from those working at the Centre itself:

"Thank you so very much for thinking of us again this year. Your unfailing support means the world to us and the families we work with".

SALVATION ARMY TOY APPEAL - is running once again, and we would love your support so that we can help more families in our area. There are a few ways you can do this:

They are partnering with The Entertainer Shop in Jackson Square. If you buy a gift here, the shop will match your gift for free, but this offer ends this Saturday. The gifts then stay with the shop and we pick them up from there.

The other option is to buy your gift and then bring this to The Independent Newsagent, 12 North Street. Either way will be great, and they would be most grateful for your support! They are currently working with 70 families and this number will rise.

WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION-a wonderful evening of music and readings for all the family in the magnificent Mother Church of the Diocese, is taking place this year on Wednesday 15th December and Thursday 16th December at 7:30pm. Doors will open at 6:30pm, with organ music being played from 7pm. The programme includes some of the finest Advent and Christmas choral music from across the centuries, sung by the world-famous Cathedral Choir, as well as favourite congregational carols. Westminster Cathedral Choir and Orchestra will be conducted by Simon Johnson, the Cathedral's new Master of Music.

This year's selection of readings ranges from the Scriptures to writers such as GK Chesterton, all read by an array of celebrity readers.

Tickets are now available at Ticketmaster:

<https://www.ticketmaster.co.uk/westminster-cathedral-tickets-london/venue/254582>

THE PASSAGE - a Catholic charity working with homeless people is raising funds through the Big Give a matched giving scheme from 12.00 noon. Every £1 donated online between 12.00 noon on Tuesday 30 November and 12.00 noon on Tuesday 7 December makes £2 and £2.25 if you are a taxpayer through Gift Aid. At a time when The Passage's finances are stretched and they are helping more homeless people please consider supporting this charity through the link <https://bit.ly/PassageBG2021>

CATHOLIC LISTENERS TELEPHONE HELPLINE - Are you a good listener? Do you enjoy helping others with their queries? Can you assist with finding basic information about a service or an organisation? Catholic Listeners Helpline Service is staffed by volunteers who are trained and operate with the ethos of compassionate listening. All calls and the caller's needs are dealt with sensitivity and due diligence. Catholic Listeners is funded by the Cardinal's Appeal and operates in the Diocese of Westminster. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, email Ade for details at catholiclisteners@gmail.com

CAROL SINGING IN JACKSON SQUARE - Friday 3rd December at the top of the traveller 4-6pm to spread the good news of Christmas and to raise money for the Winter Night Shelter.

AN EVENING OF CHRISTMAS MUSIC - with harpist and singer Lucy Bunce Sunday 12th December, 7.30pm at the St Barnabas Centre. Tickets: £10 and can be purchased online at www.stjamesthorley.church or by contacting St James Church Office on 01279 506753

A JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM- The Christmas Story. Saturday 4 December 2021 at 3pm St Andrew's Church, Much Hadham Join the Rev Steve Bate for a short ecumenical service for children. All primary aged children

are warmly invited to celebrate with carols, the Christmas story and craft (and coffee for grown-ups). All welcome.

PARISH CHARITY GOLF DAY - As the new year approaches and we are starting to make plans we are hoping to resurrect our Parish Charity Golf Day. So, for 2022 we have booked FRIDAY 10TH JUNE at the GREAT HADHAM GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB. Further details will follow later and all is subject to any restrictions from possible Covid complications! So, for now pop the date into your diaries and we will contact you later. Thanks Angela Tyson.

HRH QUEEN ELIZABETH'S PLATINUM JUBILEE in 2022 Time Capsule and Tree planting - To honour HRH the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 the Town Council will be burying a time capsule and planting a tree in Monastery Park. The Town Council is calling for residents of Bishop's Stortford to supply a record of their memories of the Queen's 70-year reign to be included in the capsule. The entries can be written text or stories, drawings, photographs, newspaper clippings or small physical items etc. The Council will also include items representing Bishop's Stortford in 2022 such as a map, newspaper etc.

All entries can be dropped off to the Tourist Information Centre either in person, via post or electronically via tic@bishopsstortford.org until 4pm on 31 January 2022. Physical entries must be submitted with a donation form available from Town Council's website or at the Tourist Information Centre. For preservation all entries must be in polyethylene bags (a sandwich bag).

Please not do include any entries with batteries, staples, paper clips, rubber bands, cling type films such as protective wrappers or any food products as this destroys preservation. The time capsule will be buried and the tree will be planted on 5 February 2022 in Monastery Park, where there will be a ceremony with the Mayor. This date has been chosen because HRH the Queen succeeded to the Throne on the 6 February 1952, on the death of her father, King George VI. She was in Kenya and became the first Sovereign in 200 years to accede while abroad. Members of the public are also invited to attend the ceremony and further details will be released soon.

PARISHIONERS OF THE WEEK - Thank you to our flower ladies who have kept our churches beautifully adorned with floral tributes throughout this year as we now approach the season of Advent. Thank you also to everyone who attended the Synodal listening sessions over the past two weeks to share your views and to everyone who made the effort to fill in an online or paper copy form. It's still not too late so if you haven't yet filled in a form, please help by doing so. It is really important that all views are heard. Please visit our Synod page on the website for more information. Thank you.

To finish this week on a quote from our Holy Father, Pope Francis....

'The measure of the greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need.'

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@redow.org.uk

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

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

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