

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

“Christmas is remembered fondly by many as a time for family. I certainly remember when I was a child in the 1950s and ‘60s, how we were part of the Christmas invasion of my grandparents’ home in Norfolk. We slept everywhere, beds, for the grown-ups if they were lucky, and us children on very old camp beds that could, and often did, collapse in the night, sofas, sleeping bags on the floor etc. We all mucked in with whatever was needed and spent time playing with our cousins. It was great to experience being part of a big family and to know that we belonged. How my grandmother managed to preside over what seemed complete chaos and leave every one of us, old and young, satisfied and happy, is beyond my comprehension! But dear granny with her large bosom and her never ending smile, always managed to do just that. Perhaps it was the gentle scent of her 4711 cologne that got her through!

Last year for most of us was rather different, but this year I suspect many of are looking forward to being part of a larger group once again. I guess we will enjoy it all the more because of having to go without last year. They say that absence makes the heart grow fonder, but some of the absences that people experienced during our lockdown were often very painful, especially when it was the beginning of what became a final parting without the hand holding and kissing that they had always expected to have. So, this Christmas will be a time of remembering in different ways. Remembering the good times and the good people, all our dearest and nearest, those we love and those who love us. It has all enabled us to recognise again the importance of those of us blessed to have family.

But let us not forget those, no small number, who will be alone this Christmas, perhaps now we will know a little of what that must be like. Let’s hope that, as Jesus told us, “...there are many rooms in my father’s house”, and we might find ourselves able for the first time to open the doors of some of those rooms and not only greet those we find there, but also be welcomed in.”

Fr Peter

Quite understandably, many of you across the Parish have been asking myself and Fr Antonio about arrangements for the Christmas Masses and the Parish team have put an enormous amount of thought into the problem. It seems that the situation is very fluid and only the other night I sat and listened to the Prime Minister bringing in new regulations. I suspect that will not be the last such announcement before Christmas.

The Diocese works closely with the office of the Chief Medical Officer. I gather that the emphasis for health & safety has now shifted away from touch infection to infection from droplets from peoples breath and, especially, droplets projected out of our mouths when we speak or sing, (*aspiration*). This certainly points towards the importance of wearing facemasks wherever possible and our policy in our three churches for the moment is that we expect people to wear facemasks for their own protection and the protection of those around them. This has now been confirmed by HMG and is to be the rule for places of worship. Of course we know that there are some who are exempt from this for medical reasons etc.

As to Christmas Masses, **AT THE MOMENT** I can say that our intention is that we will have Masses on Christmas 'eve, at **St Joseph's**, at **5pm, 7pm, and midnight; and on Christmas Day at 9 and 11; at 9am at Most Holy Redeemer and at 11.30am at Holy Cross/St Andrew's**. All these Masses will be simple Masses (no dressing up our children and bringing them up on to the Sanctuary etc., this year I am afraid). There will only be a little singing and that will be through masks. There will be no standing allowed at any of the Masses in any of the churches.

Places at the Masses at **St Joseph's** will be by **BOOKING** only, on the website (www.rcstortford.org.uk) or by telephone call to the Parish Office (01279 654063, 9am to 3pm each weekday). Remember there will be 5 Masses in all at St Joseph's (*Christmas 'eve and Christmas Day*), so we are sincerely hoping that people will be able to spread themselves out over those 5 Masses. If you have not booked, you will not get in. Please do not turn up "on spec". **Booking for the St Joseph's Masses will open at midday on Friday 17th December.**

The next day – *St Stephen's Day / Boxing Day* (Sunday) there will be the usual Sunday morning Masses at all three churches but **no evening Mass**.

As I said above all of this might well have to change as we get nearer to Christmas so we must wait and see. I will write again in the newsletter next week if there are any updates to give, so watch this space !



Parish Note Friday 10 December 2021 and the Sunday Message on the Third Sunday of Advent from Fr Peter

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

Fri 12/10/2021 12:46 PM

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

 2 attachments (38 KB)

The Sunday Message from Fr Peter on the Third Sunday of Advent.docx; Facemasks and Christmas Masses.docx;

Good afternoon

Please find attached the Sunday Message from Fr Peter on the Third Sunday of Advent which can also be found on our website, as well as an important message regarding face masks and the current arrangements for Christmas.

From Fr Peter

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Fr Peter

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.'

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.

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.

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:

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=SWVWURITmV2V3NWoxBuOGNNYXdYUT09>

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. 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>

ONLINE ADVENT VOLUNTEER GATHERING— "Rejoice the Lord is near" - Tuesday 14th December 2021, 16:00 - 17:00 - Online

'Come away for a while' and spend an hour together this Advent. We will reflect on volunteering in the light of God's Word and discuss how our faith inspires and helps us as volunteers. Open to all volunteers in the Diocese of Westminster. Bring your own mince pies! [Sign up on Eventbrite](#)

LOOKING FOR GARDEN IMPROVEMENTS IN THE NEW YEAR? -The Garden Enterprise at Caritas St Joseph's, facilitates the employment of young adults with learning disabilities by engaging them in all aspects of garden maintenance. In addition, the Garden Enterprise can provide garden design services, and supply garden furniture, made out of recycled wood by adults with learning disabilities, at Caritas St Joseph's. To discuss your garden maintenance and design requirements, please contact Gail Williams, the Centre Manager, at: gailwilliams@rcdow.org.uk

ECUMENICAL CAROL SERVICE AT HOLY CROSS AT ST ANDREWS - There will be a joint Carol Service in St Andrew's at 6pm on 19 December. All welcome.

AN EVENING OF CHRISTMAS MUSIC CANCELLED - with harpist and singer Lucy Bunce Sunday 12th December, 7.30pm at the St Barnabas Centre. This event has been **cancelled**. If you have already purchased tickets, please contact St James Church Office on 01279 506753 for a refund.

HOLY TRINITY WINTER NIGHT SHELTER - <https://www.htwinternightshelter.org/> If you would like to help raise funds towards the Holy Trinity Shelter, please donate online Sort code: 60-02-36 Account Number: 67759521 Thank you very much.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH to everyone who donated to the Afghan appeal. As a parish we collectively raised £1882.46 (£1,138 at Holy Cross and £744.46 at St Josephs). Of this total amount £1280 was gift aided.

PARISHIONERS OF THE WEEK - Big Thanks to the very lovely Sheila Warman from Most Holy Redeemer who for many years now has quietly and diligently looked after and washed the purificators and linens used at Mass. Thank you, Sheila!

To finish this week, a poem from the Diocese of Westminster Agency for Evangelisation.

*If you look for me at Christmas, You won't need a special star.
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem, I'm right there where you are.
You may not be aware of Me, Amid the celebrations.
You'll have to look beyond the stores, And all the decorations.
But if you take a moment, From your list of things to do,
And listen to your heart, you'll find I'm waiting there for you.
You're the one I want to be with, You're the reason that I came.
And you'll find Me in the stillness, As I'm whispering your name.
Love Jesus*

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

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

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