



The Catholic Parish  
of Bishop's Stortford



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**Parish Office:** Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

**Administrator/ Safeguarding:** Mrs Debbie Jackson | **Catechetical Co-ordinator:** Mrs Sophie Sullivan

[www.rcstortford.org.uk](http://www.rcstortford.org.uk)

4th Sunday of Advent

24 December 2023

**Our priests are:**

Fr Peter Harris (Parish Priest)  
Fr Marco Lazzaron (Asst Priest)



**ADORATION AND CONFESSION**

Come and join us at St Joseph and the English Martyrs Church for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation each Saturday, 3:00 to 4:00 pm.

**BAPTISM PREPARATION**

**COURSE**— The next two-part baptism preparation course will be on 15 and 22 January 2024 at 8:00 pm via Zoom. You are required to attend a course before you arrange a date for your child's baptism. Please contact the parish office to book.

**ADULT CONFIRMATION CLASSES**

**2024**—If you are an adult who is a baptised catholic, but have never been confirmed and would like to be, please get in touch with Sophie as soon as possible, ahead of an adult confirmation class beginning in 2024 email: [bstortford-catchist@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:bstortford-catchist@rcdow.org.uk)



There will be NO Parish Masses celebrated from  
Wednesday 27 December—  
Friday 29 December 2023 inclusive

**CONTACTLESS QR code**  
↓ PARISH OFFERINGS ↓



*He (the angel) went in and said to her (Mary), 'Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour (Lk 1:26-30).*

In the Gospel of this Sunday, we hear Luke's great account of the angel Gabriel being sent by God to Mary. This event changed history, making way for God to come to earth as a human child, through Mary. In his catechesis of 18th November 2020, Pope Francis introduces us to Mary as a model for our prayer and calls us to model our prayer life on hers. Here are a few points that I found very appropriate not just for today but for our whole life as Christians.

Today we meet the Virgin Mary as the prayerful woman. Mary was a simple girl engaged to a man of the house of David, a young girl of Nazareth wrapped in silence, in continuous dialogue with God who would soon entrust her with a mission. She is already full of grace and immaculate from the moment she was conceived (we celebrated this Solemnity just a few weeks ago); but she knows nothing yet of her surprising and extraordinary vocation. She was docile, and with her availability, she prepared the great event of God coming into the world.

Her small and yet immense "Here I am" had been preceded throughout salvation history by many other "Here I am", by many who were open to God's will. There is no better way to pray than to place oneself like Mary in an attitude of openness, with a heart open to God: "Lord, what you want, when you want, and how you want". This is a heart open to God's will. We always want things before asking for them, and we want them right away. This restlessness harms us. And prayer knows how to calm restlessness, knows how to transform it into availability. When we are restless, I pray, and prayer opens my heart and makes me open to God's will. In those few moments of the Annunciation, the Virgin Mary knew how to reject fear, even while sensing that her "yes" would bring her tremendously difficult trials.

In the Virgin Mary, natural feminine intuition is exalted by her most singular union with God in prayer. This is why, reading the Gospel, we note that she seems to disappear at times, only to reappear in crucial moments: Mary was open to God's voice that guided her heart, that guided her steps where her presence was needed: a silent presence as a mother and as a disciple, the one who best learned Jesus' ways.

Everything that happened around her ended up being reflected on in the depths of her heart so that it might pass through the sieve of prayer and be transfigured by it: whether it be the giving birth in a stable, the flight into Egypt, the lost of Jesus for three days, until the events of the Passion. The Mother kept everything and brought it to her dialogue with God.

How beautiful it would be if we too could be a bit like our Mother! With a heart open to God's Word, with a silent heart, with an obedient heart, with a heart that knows how to receive God's Word and allows it to grow for the Church.

*Fr Marco Lazzaron*

*Fr Peter, Fr Marco, the Parish Team and the Pastoral Council and Committees of our 3 Churches send you their thanks for the past year and every prayer and good wish for a Happy and Blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year!*