

# MASS TIMES & INTENTION

## Saturday 23<sup>RD</sup> December 2023 – Saturday of the Third Week of Advent

9.20am Mass and Rosary  
10.00am-11.00am Confessions  
6.00pm Vigil Mass

Pam Stallwood RIP

## Sunday 24<sup>TH</sup> December 2023 – FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (B)

9:00am Mass  
11:00am Mass

People of the Parish  
Mr & Mrs Hurley RIP

### Christmas celebrations

5:00pm Christmas Vigil Mass  
10:00pm Midnight Mass

Emily Begg, Rachael Lunn,  
Grace Millane, Katrina &  
Ericsson Lord RIP

## Monday 25<sup>th</sup> December – CHRISTMAS DAY

10:00am Christmas Day Mass

## Wednesday 27<sup>TH</sup> December 2023 – ST JOHN, Ap, Ev.

10 am Mass and Rosary

## Thursday 28<sup>TH</sup> December – THE HOLY INNOCENTS, Mm

10am Mass and Rosary

Philomena Walsh RIP

## Friday 29<sup>TH</sup> December 2023 – ST THOMAS OF CANTBURY, Bp, M

10am Mass and Rosary

## Saturday 30<sup>TH</sup> December 2023 – Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

10am Mass and Rosary  
6.00pm Vigil Mass

## Sunday 31<sup>ST</sup> December 2023 – THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH

9:00am Mass  
11:00am Mass  
5:00pm Holy Hour

People of the Parish



# OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL

Parish Priest: Fr Britto Belevendran

61 London Road, Wickford, Essex SS12 0AW ~ Tel 01268 733219

Website: [www.wickfordcatholic.com](http://www.wickfordcatholic.com) ~ Email: [wickford@brcdt.org](mailto:wickford@brcdt.org)

Hall Bookings: email: [wickfordcatholicalls@gmail.com](mailto:wickfordcatholicalls@gmail.com) / Tel: 01268 733219



## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (CYCLE B) 24<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2023

The Liturgy on this last Sunday of Advent invites us to be open to the creative influence of God, active in our lives as it was in the life of Mary of Nazareth.

### First Reading – 2 Samuel 7:1-16

David was generous in his desire to build a “house”, a temple, for God. God rewards his generosity, promising David that he will found a “house” for him, a Davidic line of kings on the throne of Israel.

### Responsorial Psalm

I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

### Second Reading – Romans 16:25-27

God’s dynamic activity on behalf of his people in the past is now present in the person of Jesus.

### Gospel – Luke 1:26-38

Mary’s ability to listen to God brings about a new creative outflow from God to our world.

**Mary, the mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection & pain for this wounded world. Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor & for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power. Completely transfigured, she now lives with Jesus, and all creatures sing of her fairness. She is the Woman, ‘clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet, & on her head a crown of twelve stars’ (Rev 12:1)**



## PARISH NEWS

### The Christmas Grand Draw

Congratulations to the winners of this year's Christmas Grand Draw!  
And thank you all for your generous donations in making this year's Christmas Draw a success!

We have made a total of **£1,394.00**.

**Your continued support to the Parish is much appreciated.**



### Nativity Play

Will be enacted by our Parish children before the Christmas Eve Mass at 5pm.

### The First Holy Communion Session

The next Session will be on the **06<sup>th</sup> of January 2024** followed by the obligatory Mass Attendance on the **07<sup>th</sup>**.

To all participants, please regularly bring the booklets that were issued to you for signing by the Parish Priest.

### Confirmation Programme 2023/24

Thank you to all participants who attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> Confirmation class on Thursday 14th December.

The next Confirmation class will be on **11<sup>th</sup> January 2024** in the back hall (7:30pm-9:00pm). If you are unable to attend, please email the parish office.

### Thank You- Church Christmas Cleaning

Thank you to all who came to the church on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December to help clean in preparation for Christmas. A wonderful Job indeed.

**As always, your continued support to the Parish is appreciated.**

### Church Christmas Decorations

A Tremendous Thank you to all who helped with Decorating the Church this year, your generous efforts have made the Church look beautiful and festive!

**Thank you.**

Thank you to the members of the Traveler's community - **Philomena & family** for your generous donation of £150 towards Christmas Flowers for the Church and help with cleaning the Church grounds, your generosity is much appreciated.

**Sick Friends and Relatives** - Please pray for Jonathan Fabri, Jayne & Danny Balaam, Beniamina Bilewycz, Ruby Borien, Arthur Brittain, Mary Caruana, Theresa Eldred, Patricia Gammell, Johnny Gee, Celine Guckian, Sharon Guckian, Gabrielle & Ralpie Langridge, Margaret Livesey, John Maguire, Bridget Mahoney, Carmella Micella, Elizabeth Mooney, Cecile Narbeth, Olivia Nazareth, Diane Neale, Margaret O'Doherty, Joy Orrock, Carmelo Piazza, Maureen Price, Conchita Prime, Carol Rushbrook, John Sheridan, Gerry Smyth, Maria Weedon, Elizabeth Arnold, Jane Williams, Gomez, Patricia McEvoy, Danny Curtis, Maureen Sullivan, Susan Freeman, Jane Davenport, Nathalie Ah-key, Amparo Thorogood, George O'Boyle, Pat McEvoy, Ann Parkinson, Valerie Robinson, Nelly Prada, Michael Fitzgerald, May and Chris Carey, Doreen Green, Conrad Gomes, Peter Turner, Sr. Sior Cosgrave Una, Clairin Molloy, Celine Wells, Patricia Graves and Keith Bottjer.

**Anniversaries** – We pray for Nathan Green, Ivan Bilewycz, Rachel Lunn, Bill Hayday, Patricia Powell, Fr. Wilfred Thompson, Geraldine Clarke, Francis Brown, Tazine Caine, Margaret Mary Barefield, Mary Barefield, Maureen Church, Fr. Francis Greenan, Betty Ellen Brindle, Peter Francis McGoldrick, Joe Smaje, Angela Lily Guest, Fr. Francis Wilson, Edmund Carley, Rosa Marett, May Colborne, Margaret Victoria Jenkins, Clement Charles Peacock, Margaret Horton, Ernest Percival, Michael Galvin, Canon John Byrne, John Sankoh, Anthony Goulbourne.

## DIOCESAN NEWS

### 1. Events:

#### **Christmas Play by Catholic author GK Chesterton**

Watch The Surprise, a wonderful play by Catholic author GK Chesterton this Christmas. **Sunday 24th December** 3.30pm online [www.ewtn.co.uk](http://www.ewtn.co.uk) or on sky 586. For GK Chesterton Prayers see; [www.CatholicGKChestertonSociety.co.uk](http://www.CatholicGKChestertonSociety.co.uk)

**Newham Deanery Day of Recollection**The New Year - Praying for Peace with Our Lady' led by Fr. Stewart Foster on **Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> December** at Our Lady of Compassion Church, Upton Park E13 9BF: Mass at 9.15am, talk in the hall, Eucharistic Adoration with Benediction ending at 3pm. Please bring a packed lunch.

**YOUNG ADULT RETREAT – Saturday 6th January 2024**

A full day retreat for those aged 18 – 27 (having left school), at our beautiful retreat house Walsingham House at Abbotswick. Explore your faith, be inspired to put your faith into action, learn, ask questions and pray, all with other young adults. There is a small cost of just £10 to cover the day, with lunch and refreshments provided. For more information and to apply, please visit [www.bcys.net/events/youngadults/](http://www.bcys.net/events/youngadults/)

### **SAHARA DESERT RETREAT IN MOROCCO - 26 February to 11 March 2024**

Including a day visiting Marrakesh and 9 full days in the Desert. With Fr Arnaud and Deacon Vladimir from St Antony's in Forest Gate. Designed for young adults, open to all adults able to hike 4 - 6 hours a day for 9 full days in the desert. £952 (plus flight). [www.desert-retreat.com](http://www.desert-retreat.com) or phone Catherine at 07807 348223.

### **Escorted Pilgrimage to Knock & Co Mayo, 7<sup>th</sup> April 2024.**

£899.00 per person - Price includes flight, 10kg hold luggage, 5 nights in 4\* Castle court Hotel, Westport with Dinner, Bed & Breakfast. Lunch on three days. All entertainment, excursions and transport included. Visit Knock, Galway City, Kylemore Abbey, Croagh Patrick & Ashford Castle. Single supplement on Enquiry. Contact Patricia or Natali on 01268 762 278 or 07740 175557 or email [knockpilgrimages@gmail.com](mailto:knockpilgrimages@gmail.com).

### **40yrs of Walsingham House Teams**

2024 marks 40 years of retreat teams at Walsingham House. There will be a celebration Mass with Bishop Alan on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 at Walsingham House at Abbots wick. Please save the date as it would be wonderful to see Walsingham House and BCYS alumni and friends gather to mark this milestone. More information to follow in the new year.

## **2. Programmes:**

**Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis and Youth Ministry** is an online course is designed to be an entry level qualification to help in the ongoing formation of adults involved in sacramental preparation (First Holy Communion and/or Confirmation) or youth ministry in the Diocese of Brentwood. It includes both the development of practical skills & the deepening of theological knowledge. For more information or to register

your interest please email [clairebailey@brcdt.org](mailto:clairebailey@brcdt.org) or see the website <https://bcys.net/bishops-cert/>

### **BCCS FREE SELF-HARM WORKSHOP FOR FAMILIES**

Brentwood Catholic Children's Society (BCCS) is aiming to deliver free Self-Harm support groups to both parents/carers and their teenagers should they wish to attend. The workshops will be held on a Wednesday evening for four consecutive weeks at their premises at 133 High Street, Billericay between 6.30 and 8pm. The parents' group will run alongside a separate group for the young people and will be an opportunity to think about how self-harm is affecting you, your child and your family. The young people will attend a separate group session with a BCCS Child and Adolescent Therapist. Parents will come together with their teenager at the end where they will be supported to communicate, reflect and connect. Parents are welcome to attend without their child or young person if that is a more comfortable option. To book your space, please contact Catherine Munns asap; places are likely to fill quickly:

[cmunns@bccs.org.uk](mailto:cmunns@bccs.org.uk)

(A Flyer of the event is displayed on the Church Notice board).

## **3. Appeals:**

### **Caritas Diocese of Brentwood**

In the Gospel narratives, we hear of the family displaced from their home, finding solace in a humble stable, cradling their newborn amidst the simplicity of their surroundings. This Holy Family, vulnerable yet resilient, resonates profoundly, urging us to reach out to those facing hardships during this Advent season. It prompts us to remember that amidst the festivities, there are individuals and families across Essex and East London experiencing great difficulties, requiring our support, kindness, and care. Numerous charitable organisations persist in their efforts to aid the most vulnerable in our communities, and they rely on our collective support. Please visit the Caritas website to access links to the many charities in need of generosity and volunteers.

[Caritas Diocese of Brentwood \(caritasbrentwood.org\)](http://caritasbrentwood.org)

### **Brentwood Catholic Children's Society**

This November is pleased to re-launch their virtual **Tree of Angels** which will allow you to light up a symbolic angel on a virtual Christmas

tree in memory of a loved one who has died while donating to the work of BCCS. Please visit [www.bccs.org.uk](http://www.bccs.org.uk) and click on the Christmas tab where you will see 'Tree of Angels'. You can read more about this initiative and can click onto the Tree of Angels portal to make your dedication and secure donation. If you have any questions about lighting an angel, please contact Damian [ddillon@bccs.org.uk](mailto:ddillon@bccs.org.uk).

#### **CAFOD Israeli-Palestinian Crisis Appeal**

Donate to CAFOD's Israeli-Palestinian Crisis Appeal at [cafod.org.uk/ipc](http://cafod.org.uk/ipc) or call 0303 303 3030 to support those affected and get funds to local trusted experts in Gaza and southern Israel who have been working alongside communities helping those most in need. Your donation will help support aid workers providing urgent humanitarian aid including food, water, and emergency shelter to those in need. Thank you for your prayers.

#### **4. Job adverts:**

##### **Assistant Headteacher Vacancy**

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Stanford-le-Hope.

For more information see [www.essexschoolsjobs.co.uk](http://www.essexschoolsjobs.co.uk)

Application Deadline - **14<sup>th</sup> January 12pm**. We look forward to hearing from you.

##### **Volunteers Needed**

**The SVP are looking for volunteers willing to help children put their faith into action. Could this be you?** The St Vincent de Paul Society have primary school groups called Mini Vinnies, and volunteers would support teachers or youth leaders wishing to start a group in their school or parish. They will talk to children about how they can make a difference to those living in poverty and share resources to support the group. The role is flexible but does need people with some availability during school hours (at least 2 mornings or afternoons per month) who are willing to travel within the diocese (all costs are covered). If you are passionate about helping children discover how they can make a difference in their communities, please email Sarah for more information on [youngvincentians@svp.org.uk](mailto:youngvincentians@svp.org.uk). You do not have to have previous experience of working with children as all training will be given. Our next initial training day is on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

##### **VOLUNTARY TREASURER NEEDED**

Do you have financial experience and a couple of hours per week to spare?

If so, the National Justice and Peace Network would like to hear from you. Due to the sad passing of their Treasurer, they are now in urgent need of a new one. If you are looking for some voluntary work, and share their passion for social action, please email: - [admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk](mailto:admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk)

##### **Supply Teachers - Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School**

We are also looking to build a team of Supply Teachers

Please Contact Mr Parascandolo via [info@olorcps.net](mailto:info@olorcps.net) for further details.





Justin McLellan



Pope Francis receives a small Nativity scene from a child during a meeting with the Italian Catholic Action movement at the Vatican Dec. 15, 2023. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The Christmas season is a reminder to Christians that despite hardships, God chose to join himself to humanity and still remains by its side, Pope Francis said.

"Christmas is a reminder that God loves us and wants to be with us," the pope told a group of children at the Vatican Dec. 15 during a meeting with representatives from the Italian Catholic Action movement.

The Incarnation, he said, "is a stupendous gift, and it brings with it another: that we may also love one another as brothers and sisters."

"How much we need this today," he added, "so many people, so many children suffer because of war."

The children, who came from 14 dioceses across Italy, brought with them

### **This Week's Article:**

## **At Christmas, God remains with us through war and poverty, pope says.**

Pope Francis spoke about God's closeness with a group of children and the organizers of a concert for people in need.

large paper stars to remember the children who have died from conflicts.

Pope Francis recalled that more than 3,000 children have died in Gaza since the outbreak of war in the Holy Land, as well as the more than 500 children that have died in Ukraine and the thousands that died during the years of war in Yemen.

"Their memory, in turn, invites us to be lights for the world, to touch the hearts of many people, especially those who can stop the whirlwind of violence," the pope said.

He added that only by loving God and loving one another "can the world rediscover the light and the peace that it needs" and which was proclaimed by the angels who announced Jesus' birth.

Pope Francis poses for a photo with a delegation from the Italian Catholic Action movement during a meeting at the Vatican Dec. 15, 2023. The group brought paper stars to remember the children who have died from conflicts. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

As a Christmas gift, the children gave the pope sleeping bags and personal hygiene products to be given to the papal almoner and donated to people in need.

Later in the day, the pope met with the organizers of a Christmas concert hosted at the Vatican for people in need.

"With music you present a moment of encounter, of sharing," he told them. "In a word: fraternity. This is very consistent with the message of Christmas."

Reflecting on the concert's title, "Christmas Concert with the Poor and for the Poor," the pope said moving from an attitude of being "for" the poor to one of being "with" the poor is key.

"One starts from the 'for' but wants to reach the 'with,' and this is very Christian," he said. "God came for us, but how? In what way? By coming to live with us, by even becoming like us."

Although the mystery of the Incarnation "leaves us without words," Pope Francis said "we can experience it in the encounter with the other that is different than myself: when my giving something to him or her becomes a receiving, it becomes a sharing, it becomes friendship."

The pope encouraged the organizers to pray so that they may be moved from an attitude of "for" to one of "with," because "music is not enough, lights are not enough, decorations are not enough, no, it takes prayer."

The concert, in its fourth edition, was set to take place in the Paul VI Audience Hall Dec. 15. The orchestra and chorus of Rome's opera theatre were scheduled to perform classics by Mozart, Rossini and Tchaikovsky, as well as Christmas songs such as "Silent Night" and "Joy to the World."

## **Celebrating the Incarnation, remember Bethlehem, too, pope says.**

With the ongoing violence in the Holy Land, Pope Francis asked Catholics to remember the people of Bethlehem this Christmas.



VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- When St. Francis of Assisi staged the first Nativity scene 800 years ago, he did so to remind people of the powerful, awe-inspiring truth that God became human in Jesus, Pope Francis said.

Nativity scenes are not simply works of art or folk art, the pope told hundreds of people involved in staging a live Nativity scene at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome Dec. 16.

Dressed as angels, shepherds, the Holy Family and the townspeople of Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, the amateur actors met Pope Francis in the Vatican audience hall just a few hours before their performance began.

When St. Francis staged a similar living Nativity in 1223, the pope said, he wanted "to represent in life the birth of Jesus to inspire in friars and in the people emotion and tenderness toward the mystery of God born of Mary in a stable and laid in a manger."

The live setting, he said, was designed "to give substance to the representation -- not a painting, not statues, but people in flesh and blood, in order to highlight the reality of the Incarnation."



Pope Francis gets a hug from a girl playing an angel in a living Nativity scene in Rome after an audience Dec. 16, 2023, in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

As St. Francis knew, "the purpose of the living Nativity scene is to reawaken wonder in the heart before the mystery of God who became a child."

Pope Francis said that especially this year people should keep the people of Bethlehem in mind when they see a living Nativity scene or a crèche in a home or church. "For them, it promises to be a Christmas of suffering, of mourning, without pilgrims, without celebrations."

"And naturally this extends to all the inhabitants of the land where Jesus was born, lived, died and rose again," he said. "We know the situation caused by the war, the consequence of a conflict that has lasted for decades."

Immediately after meeting the living Nativity characters, Pope Francis held an audience with musicians who would perform that evening in a Christmas concert at the Vatican to raise money for Catholic education.

The pope spoke of the importance of songs as ways to hand down "stories and prayers" and express what people are thinking and feeling in a way words alone cannot do.

"Just think of all those teenagers who sing the songs of their favorite artists by heart because those words and music combine to evoke in them a powerful blend of emotions and associations," he said.

Down through the ages, he said, Christmas has inspired a treasure trove of songs among people of all ages and all cultures.

And performers, lending their voices and vocal interpretations to those melodies become part of the tradition, he said.

"There is something beautiful about this," the pope said. "We have a message, ancient yet ever new, that of the birth of Jesus, the Savior, and different voices, from all over the world, that come together to make it heard."

Christmas songs are never "uniform, homogenized," he said. "Christmas carols are to be sung with that art that comes from the heart."