

Parish Newsletter

OUR LADY OF RANSOM

17th December 2023 Advent 3B - Psalter Week 3



Lost, the stranger drove up to a deserted farmhouse to ask directions. He came across an elderly woman sitting in the entrance, and a man working in the yard, whistling. The whistling was loud, disjointed and out of tune. Jarred by this whistling, he asked the man why he whistled so. “you see that lovely woman, she is my wife of over 60 years, she’s recently gone blind. It’s terrified her. So by continually whistling, she’ll know I’m around, it gives him the assurance she badly needs”.

John the Baptist wants to offer us God’s assurance. Not his own. So he points away from himself to Jesus, telling us he, John, is not the one. His growing popularity could have seduced him to point to himself as great, the “one who I to come”. But he knows the truth.

And knowing the truth, he is arguably and strangely abrasive, impatient, tactless, tunnel-visioned, and maybe not possessing the greatest verbal and relational skills. Confrontational, talk of retribution, justice and God’s wrath. Possibly moralistic and harsh. But this ‘out of tune whistling’ points to Our Lord’s assurance, not his. Our Lord’s, where everything is harmonious and in tune. Maybe this is why Jesus says of him, “ the least in heaven is greater than he”.

John is not yet the reconciler, the healer, the lover, the man of compassion, tenderness, tolerance and patience. It can take later-life enlightenment to really take these energies on in a big way. This is where Jesus takes John’s message forward, puts the whistling ‘in tune’. John is right, as far as he goes. He clears the way for Jesus and “literally” exits. Now there is freedom for the bigger message.

Much of religion, sad to say, has largely followed only in many of John’s ways and not the ways taken forward by Jesus. Exclusivity, impatience, intolerance, too much focus on retribution and following “correct” rules with too little focus on life-giving relationships. Mercy can be severely lacking; too quick in defining who’s in and out, up or down, who can receive and who can’t, and so on. Honestly! As if we really know! Maybe that is why much religion is laughed at and frowned upon today. Maybe that is why in many places Christmas is losing the Christ.

Our religions are meant to heal, reconcile, be inclusive, demonstrate authentic compassion and God’s endless mercy. That is why it is good news. Anything else is simply a lie. Or plainly, “bad news”.

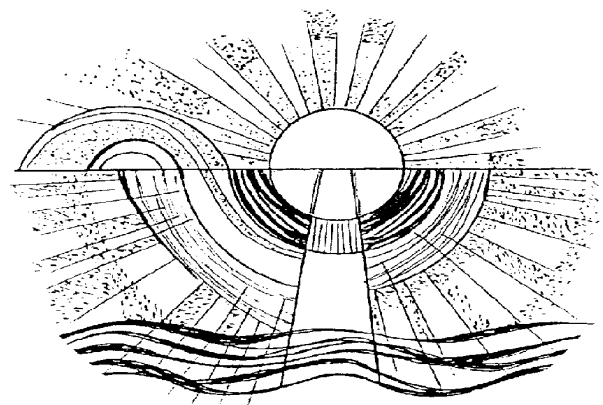
Do we follow only the Baptist? Or are we finally and hopefully - “Christians?”

First Reading: Isaiah 61: 1-2, 10-11

Psalm: Luke 1:46-50, 53-54

Second Reading 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28



MASS INTENTIONS

Saturday 16th December

5.30pm Mass Bridget and Luke Kavanagh RIP – Shelagh Mesher

Sunday 17th December **3rd Sunday of Advent B (Gaudete Sunday)**

8.00am Mass Parish Community

10.00am Mass Mike and Kath Geeson RIP - Maria Francke and Family

Monday 18th December

9.30am Mass Hilary Barry RIP - Isobel and Tom Kennedy

Tuesday 19th December

9.30am Mass Julia Mear RIP (A) – Mary Rickards

Wednesday 20th December

10.00am Mass Peter Lydon – Kathy Hoare

Thursday 21st December

9.30am Mass Tony Reuben RIP - Zara

Friday 22nd December

9.30am Mass Kathleen Steele RIP – Gwyn Derrick

Saturday 23rd December

5.30pm Mass Dec'd Family and friends of Cook and Mead Families RIP

Sunday 24th December **4th Sunday of Advent (Prayer for Expectant Mothers).**

8.00am Mass Parish Community

10.00am Mass Hilary Barry RIP – Mary Hennessey

Christmas Vigil Mass 6.00pm Emma Louise Lucibello RIP – Susan and Damian Lucibello

Midnight Vigil Mass 12.00am Parish Community

All Church Services are now Live Streamed. To take part please go to

<https://stream.seccomgroup.com/channel/olor>

Masses can be watched "live" or later as a recording

PARISH PRIEST

Father Paul Fox

50 London Hill, Rayleigh

Essex SS6 7HP

01268 38.24.99

www.olorchurch.org

email: rayleigh@brcdt.org

Public Mass times:

Saturdays 5.30pm

Sundays 8am & 10.00am

Mondays & Tuesdays 9.30am

Wednesdays 10.00am

Thursdays & Fridays 9.30am

Please be aware - Times and days of weekday Masses are subject to change.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation: 4.30pm – 5pm Saturday evenings (not in the confessional box)

Our Parish is part of The Brentwood Diocesan Trust, Registered Charity Number 2340



ANNIVERSARIES Kindly pray for Finbarr McQuaid, Annie Reidy, Elizabeth O' Shea, Jean Stone, Frances Tibbs, Lorraine Elmer, Betty Lowe, Mike Geeson and Connie Brilus. **May they rest in Peace.**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confessions) will be available this week on Tuesday December 19th (twice) from 10am to 11.30 am and 6.30pm to 7.30pm; and Thursday December 21st from 10am to 11.30am.

† Please keep in your prayers Mr. Keith Miller who died recently. Keith's funeral will be at Our Lady's on January 2nd at 1.30pm. Please also keep Kathy and his family in prayer as well. May he rest in peace. †

.....THINKING ABOUT THE CATHOLIC FAITH? ...

Is something in you telling you to go deeper? Or find out? Perhaps you are, or maybe you know someone who is doing just that. Or maybe stopped coming to Church, and is wondering about returning. We are looking for depth. Or, you yourself might wish to informally ask questions, so deepen your understanding and faith. Whatever your circumstances, you are welcome to come along to our Parish RCIA programme and learn more about what it means to be a Catholic Christian.



Mondays at 8pm in the Bethany Room

If you are not part of the Catholic Tradition, and you decide during the programme you would like to commit yourself to the Catholic Faith, you may be received into the Church at Easter next year. Of course, practising Catholics who want to ask questions are more than welcome. **If you are interested in joining the programme, please contact Fr. Paul for more details.**(01268 382499 or rayleigh@brcdt.org)

NEWSLETTER ITEMS: Please ensure all items for the parish newsletter are submitted to the parish office by **11am on Thursdays** at the latest.

Special Collection Gift Aid Envelopes:

For those making their regular donation online/by bank transfer, and would like the Gift Aid envelopes for special collections only, they will be available to collect from the church porch.

Mass Intentions. For information, all requested Mass intentions will be for February onwards, as all Masses between now and February have intentions allocated to them. Thank you for your ongoing generosity.

Sunday Coffee Morning

If you are interested in hosting a Coffee Morning after 10am Sunday Masses to raise money for a charity of your choice, please contact the parish office.



Kids" Bulletin A children's version of the gospel is available weekly. This can be accessed on the following website: www.thekidsbulletin.com and is aimed at primary school children. It can be downloaded and printed out.



OLOR Lourdes Pilgrimage 2024 – Monday 10th to Friday 14th June 2024

Bookings are now being accepted for next year's Lourdes pilgrimage. Flights will be from Stansted Airport using Ryanair scheduled services. Accommodation will be provided by Hotel Stella on a full-board basis for 4 nights. The cost is £560 per person, based on 2 or more sharing a room. A single room supplement of £120 applies. Due to Ryanair's flight booking policy the cost shown is subject to change. Recommended optional insurance cover can be arranged through the operators, Tangney Tours, at a cost of £41 per person.

Those still considering joining the pilgrimage or would like to know more, please contact Colin Griffin, Tel. 01268 772322, Mob. 07841 013606 or email colingriffin@outlook.com.

Children's Liturgy.

We would like to invite any adults who may have thought of getting involved in Children's Liturgy – either as assistant or leader – to have a chat with any of the team. You may like to come along and see what we do. To continue running 2 groups weekly, which is so beneficial for our lovely parish children and families, we do need a few more people to fill some slots on our rota. Perhaps you may be able to help us out one session a month?

Please think about itthank you.

Christmas Eve Family Mass- come and join in our nativity tableau for the Gospel at the family mass, on Christmas Eve at 6pm!

We have plenty of costumes, all shapes and sizes and there is room for everyone. No one is too little, and we hope some of our older children will be able to guide the younger ones, having been part of this before. If your child would like to join in, please make a note of the dates below:

(Today) Sunday 17th December – after 10 am mass – practice for Christmas Eve

Any adults who may be able to assist, and see what is involved, to help to continue this tradition for years to come, would be welcome!

REPOSITORY.



Christmas stock is on display. If you have any particular requests please let us know in good time for an order to be placed. There is a catalogue from which you are welcome to choose - however supply will depend on remaining stock availability the closer we get to Christmas. As always we shall do our best to help.



Christmas Flowers: if you would like to make a donation in memory of someone, please feel free to do so. Please place any donations in an envelope, with the name concerned, and hand in to the presbytery. Thank you.

In Aid of Missio As all the contributions to Missio are now in, I will be preparing the Year End report for Fr Paul to sign off next week before posting to Missio Head Office.

It remains for me to say 'Thank You' on behalf of Missio for your continued help and support for the Pope's Charity.

It goes without saying that it has been another difficult year in terms of the cost of living rise but, nevertheless, our parishioners have continued to support Missio and we should achieve another excellent result this year too.

Christmas is like candy; it slowly melts in your mouth, sweetening every taste bud, making you wish it could last forever.

May the Good Lord Bless you and your family this Christmas and wish you all a splendid New Year too.

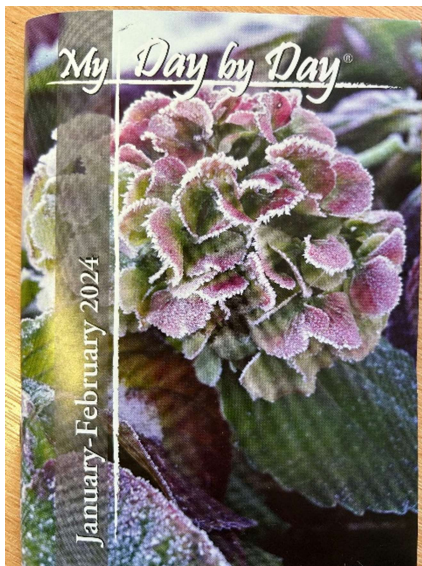
With lots of Love and God's Blessings,

Angela and Jovito

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@syp.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 27th February 2024.

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 or see the website <https://bcys.net/bishops-cert/>



On Sale Now.

A Message from HARP: Our sincere thanks on behalf of HARP this year particularly over Harvest where we collected thousands of items to feed people living in our in our services. This included over 1000 tins of baked beans and 1500 cans of soup. This amazing support means we saved significantly on our 'food shop' and

allows us to direct funds raised into providing the vital support that people need to overcome homelessness for good.

As we approach the cold months ahead we wanted to let you know that HARP is opening a winter shelter for people who are currently rough sleeping.

The shelter will be managed by HARP staff and volunteers and will open from 7pm every evening and close at 8.30am with people using the shelter then being encouraged to visit HARP's Bradbury Centre during the day for breakfasts, hot showers and to access other services as normal. We are working in partnership with the council on this initiative.

How can you get involved?

- We are in need of a range of items including gifts to give visitors over Christmas, but critically we need pillows, duvets, single sheets and winter clothes (medium sizes). Items can be second hand but must be clean and ready to use.
- Donate money – if you are holding a collection over Christmas we would welcome any donations so that we are able to continue to support people after the shelter has closed. To donate to our winter appeal click here – www.harpsouthend.org.uk.
- Volunteers – If anyone in your church is willing to volunteer we need people between 7 pm and midnight (or 11 pm) every night. [Click here](#) to find out more about what is involved.
- Spread the word, we could not do what we do without your support

Thank you once again for your ongoing support and any support you are able to give to this vital service this winter. Do please get in touch if you have a sizeable donation as I can arrange for a collection.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy new year

Sahara Desert Retreat in Morocco, 26 February – 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 or phone Catherine at 07807 348223

Brentwood Youth: Walsingham House

Walsingham House volunteer team: applications for the Walsingham House at Abbotswick volunteer retreat team are now open. If you are aged between 18-23 and are considering a gap year then please consider the Walsingham House Team. The volunteer team work with around 5000 young people from across the diocese running retreats for Yr5-

Yr13 students. For more information please see our website:

<https://bcys.net/whabbotswick/be-on-team/> or email clairebailey@brcdt.org

Walsingham House available for day groups: Walsingham House at Abbotswick is a beautiful setting for days of reflection, retreats or meetings. They are open to accept bookings for day groups on Wednesdays – Saturdays. For more information or to make a booking please email the Hospitality Manager, Issy, at issycordova@brcdt.org

Interested in subscribing to the Catholic Universe Newspaper? Contact -

Michelle Jones

Subscriptions Manager

email: michelle.jones@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

Tel: 07436 617650

BCYS YOUTH MASS

- YOUTH MASS takes place on the first Thursday of **every** month at Brentwood Cathedral, beginning with pizza & refreshments in the Parish Hall from 6pm, an hour of input, workshops, youth led prayer and formation from different organisations each month, and Youth Mass celebrated in the Cathedral at 7:30pm. Absolutely everyone is welcome, please bring instruments, and sing, serve or read if you wish! No need to book
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- **BCYS SUMMER LOURDES YOUTH PILGRIMAGE – July 2024 (exact dates TBC)**
 - **Bookings are now open online for the Brentwood Catholic Youth Service pilgrimage to Lourdes in July.**

The week is spent serving the main Diocesan pilgrimage, assisting the elderly and infirm, alongside times of retreat, reconciliation, visiting the baths, taking part in the beautiful Processions, an afternoon in the mountains, party and social nights - all with other young Catholics from around our Diocese.

The pilgrimage is open to all those in school year 10 – 13, with all those of school leaver age (18+) invited to join us as young leaders (subject to attending a training weekend). All details and applications can be found on the website www.bcys.net/events/sl

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 31st August 2024 at Walsingham House at Abbotswick. Please save the date as it would be wonderful to see Walsingham House and BCYS alumni and friends gather together to mark this milestone. More information to follow in the new year.



Retrouvaille: A Programme for Couples Struggling in their Marriages

Help Your Marriage – Do you feel alone? Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue ... or have you just stopped talking to each other? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille is a programme to support couples who have difficulties in their marriage. It brings a positive focus, new hope and helps nourish and grow your marriage. Tens of thousands of couples headed for divorce have successfully saved their marriages by attending and using the tools provided. The programme helps spouses uncover or re-awaken the love, trust and commitment that originally brought them together. It helps them through difficult times whether they are disillusioned or in deep misery. There is no group therapy or group work. For confidential information about 'Retrouvaille' or to register for the next programme commencing with a Virtual weekend on 8 - 11 February 2024 or a Face to Face weekend in Welwyn Garden City on 14-16 June 2024, call or text 07887 296983 or 07973 380443 or email retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com - or visit www.retrouvaille.org.uk

Retrouvaille – Do you need in your marriage? Retrouvaille has helped many couples find new hope, nourishment and growth in their marriages. If you want to uncover or reawaken the love, trust and commitment that brought you together and work through difficult times in your marriage contact Retrouvaille confidential for more information about our 2024 programmes. There is no group therapy or group work. Our next programme commences with a Virtual weekend on 8 - 11 February 2024 or there is a Face to Face weekend in Welwyn Garden City on 14-16 June 2024. Call or text 07887 296983 or 07973 380443, email retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com - or visit www.retrouvaille.org.uk