



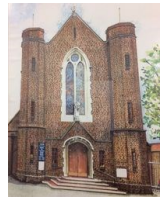
St Joseph's Catholic Church

Champion Road, Upminster

Parish Priest: Fr Matthew Bemand-Qureshi

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PARISH NEWSLETTER

16TH / 17TH DECEMBER 2023

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT (B) - Mass Book Pg 30

(Isaiah 61:1-2.10-11, I Thessalonians 5:16-24, John 1:6-8, 19-28)

There are two Sundays in the Church's year when the liturgical colour is rose pink, one in each of the Church's penitential seasons. The purple of repentance is lightened by an anticipated note of joy, reflected in the Latin names given to these Sundays (taken from the entrance antiphons used at a said Mass) – *Gaudete* in Advent (today!) and *Laetare* in Lent – both of which can be translated 'rejoice!'

This year, with Christmas on a Monday, Gaudete Sunday is also the start of the final week-long countdown to Christmas day, marked by a series of antiphons used at evening prayer known as the Great 'O' Antiphons. Each antiphon addresses the coming Messiah with a title drawn from the old testament and elaborated with further scriptural imagery. These antiphons are the basis of the hymn that is often sung in the latter part of Advent: O Come, O Come Emmanuel! If you don't know it yet, you will this weekend!

The reason for our joyfulness on this Sunday is an awareness that the Lord is near. St Paul writes in the letter to the Philippians, in the text which gives this Sunday its name, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." We find something very similar in the first letter to the Thessalonians which is read at Mass today.

St Paul like most early Christians is expecting the second coming sooner rather than later. But he also surely has in mind our Lord's own promise: 'I am with you always, until the end of the age'. The most significant title found in the 'O' Antiphons is surely 'Emmanuel' – the name that appears in Isaiah's prophecy of the virgin birth, which means 'God is with us'. This is the truth we celebrate at Christmas, and the reason for our joy: that the eternal, infinite God, the creator of all things, has chosen to become part of his creation, to live among his creatures, and to remain close to us.

Our gospel today is almost a repeat of last week's. Again we hear John the Baptist uttering the cry 'make a straight way for the Lord' and pointing to one who is to come, far greater than he is. John (the evangelist) prefaces this with an explanation that this man was sent by God as 'a witness to speak for the light'. In the light of Christ, God-

with-us, we understand that John's unsettling and insistent call for repentance and conversion is a sign of God's love. God, as a good father, wants what is truly good for us. He has made us for life – for a share in his life – and even when we lose sight of him and go our own way, he does not give up on us. But he does not take away our freedom either: that is why we must take heed of this call to realign our lives, our priorities and our desires, with his. God is not in competition with us, only with that part of us which stubbornly thinks we don't need him in order to find true and lasting happiness.

Christian hope is not the same as optimism. We don't try and kid ourselves that everything is just fine as it is. Suffering is unavoidable in this life. Things are not as they are meant to be. But we do believe in the essential goodness of all that God has created, and in the essential goodness of God himself whose light cannot be overcome by the darkness of sin and corruption. In Christ, all things are made new, and even as we experience the birthpangs of a creation waiting for that moment when his glory is fully revealed (c.f. Romans 8.18-23), knowing that God goes to the lengths he does out of love for us is indeed a source of lasting joy.

Next Sunday is the fourth Sunday of Advent. It is also Christmas Eve! The fourth Sunday of Advent has its own distinctive focus, on the nine months which our saviour spent in his mother's womb before his birth in the stable of Bethlehem. There is no better preparation for a Christ-filled Christmas than to complete our Advent journey with Mary and Joseph as they await the birth of this holy child – even though it means coming to Mass twice between Saturday evening and Monday morning! When you come to Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, I encourage you to bring the figure of the baby Jesus from your home nativity set for a blessing. There will also be a special blessing at each Mass for expectant mothers and their unborn children.

God bless, Fr Matthew.

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES: Sunday 24th: 5pm (early vigil Mass), 6.30pm (family vigil Mass), 11pm ('Midnight' Mass with the choir, carols from 10.30pm). Monday 25th: 8am (said Mass of Dawn) and 10am (Sung Mass). Weekend Masses as usual for the Fourth Sunday of Advent (23rd/24th).

CHRISTMAS CARDS: Please take a parish Christmas Card if you didn't get one last week, and take more if you can pass them on. The picture of the Virgin at Prayer, which was painted for our church (a copy of the original painting by Sassoferrato, in the National Gallery), was attributed in good faith to an unidentified sister of the Sacred Heart of Mary. It appears that it was commissioned by the superior of the convent but painted by a parishioner, Mr J Paxton Slade.

CHRISTMAS POSTERS: Some copies of the 'Keep Christ in Christmas Poster' produced by the Knights of St Columba are available in the porch (choice of A3 or A4), as well as posters detailing our Mass times. Please take one if you can display it, as a witness to our local community. More can be printed if needed!

PARISH YOUTH EVENT: There will be an event for those in year 7 and above on Wednesday 20th December from 4pm-6pm, in the Social Centre. Please register online at <https://tinyurl.com/siyouthdec>

BLESSING OF THE HOLY CHILD: On the fourth Sunday of Advent (23rd/24th December), you are encouraged to bring the figure of the baby Jesus from your home nativity set to Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday morning, for a special blessing.

RIP FUNERAL NOTICES: Please pray for the repose of the soul of Marion Dearson. Marion's funeral will also be held here on Thursday 4th January at 11.30am. May she rest in the eternal peace of Christ.

CANNING TOWN & CUSTOM HOUSE/ROYAL DOCKS CHRISTMAS COLLECTION:

Thank you for your most generous collection. The money raised will be sent to the parishes to assist those who will be under particular financial pressure at Christmas.

OUR CATHOLIC FAITH: Our next session is this Thursday (21st December) at 7.45pm in Church.

SACRED HEART OF MARY GIRLS SCHOOL— NATIVITY SHOW WITH A

TALENTED TWIST: Monday 18th December—show starts at 6pm. Tickets £7.50 VIP (includes mulled wine, fizzy drink, mince pie and popcorn), adults £5.00 and students/children £2.50. For more details please contact the school on 01708-222660.

ST JOSEPHS PRIMARY SCHOOL—RELIEF MIDDAYS: St Joseph's School are looking to recruit a number of relief middays. To view the details please following the link: [Havering Schools \(jgp.co.uk\)](http://Havering Schools (jgp.co.uk))

VOCATIONS: Interested in a Vocation to the Priesthood? Vocations Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Willesden on Saturday 23rd December. Contact Fr Mark Swires - VocProm@brcdt.org – for more information.

"VOICES FOR CHRISTMAS": Wednesday 20th December in the North St. Halls, RM11 1QX 8.00p.m. Written and performed by Kevin Walsh. The nativity story told by the people who were there. With popular carols for all to sing. Complimentary festive refreshment included in the price, £8 payable on the door. All profits to the Hornchurch Passion Play.

BCYS SUMMER LOURDES YOUTH PILGRIMAGE – Last week of July 2024 (exact dates TBC). Bookings are now open online for the Brentwood Catholic Youth Service pilgrimage to Lourdes in July. Serve the main Diocesan pilgrimage, assist the elderly and infirm, with times of retreat, reconciliation, visit the baths, take part in the beautiful Processions, as well as 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/sl24

ADVENT PENITENTIAL SERVICE BRENTWOOD CATHEDRAL: On Monday 18th December at 7.30pm there will be an Advent Penitential Service at Brentwood Cathedral. Fr Matthew will be attending and hearing confession so please do feel free to attend.

LUNCHTIME RECITAL—TRAJECTI VOCES: Please join us to listen to Trajecti Voces, a Choir from Holland giving a seasonal lunchtime recital at 12 noon on Saturday 30th December in the Cathedral.

MASS INTENTIONS THIS WEEK

Sat 16th Dec 5.30pm—6.15pm 6.30pm	SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT ADORATION AND CONFESSIONS People of the parish
Sun 17th Dec 9.00am 11.00am	THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT Mon & Noel Lynch RIP (Keefe) Bernard Barrett RIP Anniv. (Family)
Mon 18th Dec 9.15am	Deceased members of the Byrne Families (Byrne)
Tues 19th Dec 9.15am	James Brennan RIP (Brennan)
Wed 20th Dec 9.15am 12 noon—1pm	Francis & Teresa Joseph and Raffael Croose RIP ADORATION AND CONFESSIONS
Thur 21st Dec 9.15am	Anthony Brennan RIP (Brennan)
Frid 22nd Dec 9.15am	Mitzi Williams RIP Anniv. (Cunningham)
Sat 23rd Dec 5.30pm—6.15pm 6.30pm	ADORATION AND CONFESSIONS For the intentions of Rita Cuthert (Butler)
Sun 24th Dec 9.00am 11.00am 5pm 6.30pm 11pm	FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT/NATIVITY OF THE LORD Catherine Sweeney RIP Anniv. (Jane) People of the parish For the intentions of Sam & Winnie Private Intention People of the parish

USEFUL INFORMATION

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION & CONFESSIONS: Saturday evening 5.30-6.15pm and Wednesday 12 noon-1pm. Confessions also available on request when Fr Matthew is available or by appointment.

PARISH OFFICE HOURS: Mon-Fri 9am-12.30pm (except Wednesdays).

Fr Matthew (emergencies—voice only): 020 3332 0486

St Joseph's School - School office 01708-220277

Sacred Heart of Mary School - School office 01708-222660

Baptisms & weddings - please speak to Fr Matthew after Mass

Repository: Saturdays before & after Mass, and Sundays after the 9am Mass until 10.55am

Queen's Hospital: If someone staying in the hospital would like Holy Communion, please contact the lay chaplaincy coordinator Helen Miranda on 01708 477890. In an emergency ask the ward staff to request the on-call Catholic priest via switchboard.

Facebook: [stjosephschurchupminster](https://www.facebook.com/stjosephschurchupminster) **Web:** www.stjosephschurchupminster.com

**PLEASE ENSURE YOU ARE AWARE OF THE POSITION OF THE
EMERGENCY FIRE EXIT DOORS IN THE CHURCH, AND PLEASE ENSURE THAT ALL
MOBILE TELEPHONES ARE SILENCED BEFORE THE SERVICE BEGINS**