

**Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady
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**BULLETIN C 2 – 5TH DECEMBER 2021
THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

My dear brothers and sisters,

The Advent season, which in my mind is too short, is a time of preparation not only for the celebrations at Christmas, but also for our meeting with Christ when he comes again as our judge. There is much talk in the media at present about this Christmas going to be better than last. I am all for that. I like the trees and the lights, the cards and the presents, the turkey and the wine, and all the other things that Christmas is famous for. It is the birth of the Lord Jesus first and foremost that we should prepare to celebrate.

One excellent way of preparing for Christmas as well as for the end time is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This year we will be having Services of Reconciliation in the parishes of Harlow. I list them below for your information. At these services there will be additional priests to hear individual confessions, it makes life a lot easier for parishes with only one priest. There will also be the opportunity to make your confession at other times, please see future bulletins for times.

You will notice that our Carol Service will be at 3pm on 19th December, this will be followed by refreshments in the hall. Mary Fitzgerald will be running one of her raffles for church funds. You can see the first prize in the porch and tickets will be on sale this morning.

The times of Christmas Masses are also listed below. The additional Mass on Christmas Eve at 5.00pm will be particularly child friendly and an opportunity for families to celebrate the feast together.

God bless you all

Fr. John

The Synodal Pathway: Our Journey Together

Coming together with loved ones this Christmas will have a special significance after the past year. Life has changed and perhaps there are things we see differently now. During Advent we are asked to listen to one another and to God as the Catholic Church worldwide embarks on our Synodal Pathway - Our Journey Together. Reflecting on journeys in the Christmas story: What was on the mind of Mary and Joseph as they made their way to Bethlehem? What did the shepherds say to one another after the angels left them? What did the wise men discuss as they followed the star? Similarly, we would like you to embark on Our Journey Together and tell us about your faith journey. To find out more please visit:

<https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/synod-2021-2023/>

TIMES OF MASSES THIS WEEK

Sun	5	2 nd Sun of Advent	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	Marie Flood People of the Parish
Tue	7	St. Ambrose	1900 Mass	Our Bishop
Wed	8	Immaculate Conception	1000 Mass 1020 Adoration	Vocations
Thu	9	Feria of Advent	1000 Mass	Norah Marshall (RIP)
Fri	10	Feria of Advent	1000 Mass	Jennifer Ryan (RIP)
Sun	12	3 rd Sun of Advent	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Fr. John will be available to hear your confession on Tue at 6.30pm & Wed at 10.30am

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Have you ever noticed that if you stop for a few moments and watch construction workers on a building site, it often appears that nothing much is happening? Yet if you regularly pass the site and check the progress, you will probably be amazed at the speed with which the building is taking shape.

As human beings we have learnt how to construct not only buildings but transport networks that enable us to travel across or through even the most barren or mountainous terrain. Indeed some of the great viaducts and bridges add to the spectacular views we encounter. They are testimony to our determination to get to places no matter what the obstacles.

In today's Gospel reading, we hear the words of the prophet Isaiah painting a powerful poetic vision: "Every valley will be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low, winding ways will be straightened and rough roads made smooth." The writer of the book of Baruch, which we heard as our first reading, would have been familiar with Isaiah's words and echoes them in his own. In the Gospel Luke links it with the work of John the Baptist. John was the last of the prophets, sent to prepare for the Lord's coming. His job was to prepare as smooth a passage as possible for Jesus. We in turn are being invited to use this image as a way of thinking about how we might prepare ourselves to welcome the Lord.

As the years pass we might be tempted to reflect that, while we hear the call to prepare well every Advent, nothing much seems to change either in our own lives or in the family of the Church or in the world at large. But if we do think like that we would be wrong. The first coming of Jesus did radically change the course of human history. John's proclamation of a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins paved the way for Jesus to minister his Father's compassion to us in a way far beyond our imagining. Nothing can ever be the same again, whether we have taken this fact on board yet or not. The faith of the Church is that everything is moving towards the fulfilment of God's plan and that in due time the Lord will return again in glory. This is very much part of the Advent message: we look back and celebrate the coming of Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem and at the same time we look forward to his coming again in glory. So there is a lot to prepare for.

St Paul gives us a clue as to how we can get this right in practice. Firstly, it is worth remembering that the work begins and ends in God, which is why Paul says: "I am quite certain that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the Day of Christ Jesus comes." The work began for us when we were baptised and will continue until the journey is completed. Sometimes on a long journey we can get tired and disillusioned and wonder why we ever began it in the first place. Apart from the fact that we may become physically tired, there can also be the tension that arises with those who share the journey with us. We may have had to do our fair bit of bridge-building on that front and know that overcoming personal relationship problems can be much more taxing than finding or preparing a straight road to our destination. It is here that we can begin to take Paul's prayer to heart: increasing in love for each other, improving our knowledge and deepening our perception so that we can always recognise what is best.

The Christian faith has so much to offer others and especially at this time of the year. Christmas, for all that we may feel it has been hijacked by the commercial world, still touches the hearts of people and the story loses none of its magic, no matter how often it is told. Tell the story again to one another and especially to the children. Look back and see just how far you have come: hopefully the building has been going up more quickly than you realised. And now look for ways to smooth out what still needs sorting before the Lord comes again

CHRISTMAS TIMETABLE

Tue	14		7.00pm Reconciliation Service at Holy Cross
Sun	19		3.00pm Carol Service followed by Refreshments and Raffle
Wed	22		7.00pm Reconciliation Service at Assumption
Fri	24	Christmas Eve	5.00pm Family Mass 10.00pm Bethlehem Mass
Sat	25	Christmas Day	10.00am Mass of the Day
Sun	26	Holy Family	10.00am Mass