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**BULLETIN C 3 – 12TH DECEMBER 2021**  
**THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

My dear brothers and sisters,

Today at mass our attention is on St. John the Baptist and his ministry of Herald to our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a herald's job not just to announce the imminent arrival of a king, but to prepare the path for him. Last Sunday we heard the Baptist echoing the prophet Isaiah "prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" This week's Gospel has him answering questions from various groups, to all of them the real answer is the same REPENT, that is turn away from sin allow the coming Christ to transform your lives to ways of justice, love and peace.

During this Advent season the Church calls us, her sons and daughters, to follow the advice of the Baptist, to repent and allow the Saviour to transform our lives. The sacrament of Reconciliation is always available to us, but especially in the two penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, as we prepare to celebrate the great events in Our Lord's life. So in these last days before Christmas let prepare not just our homes but our very souls to truly welcome the Christ child once more.

There are a series of Services of Reconciliation in Harlow, the first is at Holy Cross on Tuesday this week at 7.00pm. At these services there will be an opportunity for individual confession, additional priests will be present to assist.

Do make a note of our Parish Carol service next Sunday at 3.00pm, I know our recently enlarged choir have been practicing hard for this annual carol event. The Christmas Raffle will be drawn afterwards in the hall.

God bless you all,  
Fr. John

**TIMES OF MASSES THIS WEEK**

Sun	12	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sun of Advent	10.00 Mass	People of the Parish
			1800 Mass	
Tue	14	St. John of the Cross	1900 Reconciliation Service at Holy Cross	
Wed	15	Feria of Advent	1000 Mass	Jim Birchall (RIP)
			1020 Adoration	
Thu	16	Feria of Advent	1000 Mass	Kay Hill (RIP)
Fri	17	Feria of Advent	1000 Mass	Frederick White (RIP)
Sun	19	4 <sup>th</sup> Sun of Advent	1000 Mass	People of the Parish
			1800 Mass	Mcloughlin Family (RIP)

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Reconciliation Service at 7.00pm in Holy Cross, Harlow  
Fr. John will be available to hear your confession on Wed at 10.30am or by appointment

## GOSPEL REFLECTION

What does it mean to be happy? This is surely one of our deepest questions and one that preoccupies the different stages of a person's life. At each stage, whether in childhood, during the angst of teenage years, in the years of exploration of early adulthood, in the joy of love and family, in sickness and in health, and later as we decline, we seek happiness, which is often elusive. The desire to love and be loved is ever present. It brings joy and sometimes pain, contentment and struggle, anxiety and sorrow, happiness and peace. We also try to know the meaning of God's love as we face the ups and downs of life. At times, we feel God is distant rather than close, judgemental rather than merciful, sometimes like a kind and forgiving father or a tender and caring mother. For some people, the search for happiness leads to excessive behaviour, wrong roads taken; for others, the search for happiness seems much easier and smoother.

A time of lockdown brought the nature of happiness to the front of the mind once again. For some this period was a good opportunity and a chance to re-evaluate priorities; for others, this period was painful and brought much friction. Domestic violence soared during the lockdowns. Healthcare professionals worked all the hours of the day to try to save sick people and went the extra mile in their care. The waste collectors and the local shops, the bus drivers and those in essential services, were more respected. People found deep happiness in serving others by volunteering or helping in a neighbourly way. It was the best of times and the worst of times.

At the time of King Herod, the Jewish people longed for a Messiah who would restore the kingdom of Israel and re-establish a right relationship with God. The coming of the Anointed One of God would bring happiness and fulfil the yearnings and longings of the people. The preaching of John the Baptist in the desert by the River Jordan led people to gather and wonder if he was the Messiah. Was he the prophet to fulfil the hope of the prophet Zephaniah in the first reading? Would he lead them to rejoice and dance with shouts of joy? Would he give them happiness? The coming of the Messiah might be likened to a return to the promised land. Some thought the Romans would be overthrown and the occupation ended. Others hoped God's law would be respected and lived. Some imagined that the world would come to an end.

John the Baptist tells the crowds who gather around him that he is not the Messiah, but rather the messenger or precursor who points them towards the one who comes in the name of the Lord. John promises that the Christ will inaugurate a new time and create a new people who will receive the gift of baptism by water and the Holy Spirit. They will live in a new relationship with Jesus Christ as friends inspired by the Holy Spirit. St Paul, writing to the Church at Philippi, tells the new Christians that they can trust in Jesus Christ in prayer and be thankful for his gifts. In him is to be found true happiness.

In baptism we were each baptised by water and anointed with the oil of chrism and we received the gift of the Holy Spirit. We were each clothed in a white robe as a new creation in Christ. We were each given a lighted candle to be a sign of faith. In this way, each of us began our new life with Christ who walks with us. Being a follower of Christ does not guarantee a life free from suffering. Such a life does not guarantee that we will not make mistakes or foolish choices. It guarantees that we can return to our merciful God and ask forgiveness, that our dignity as Christians can always be restored and that we can begin again as followers of Christ. Happiness comes from knowing that Christ is with me and will never abandon me. I am not alone. Christ walks with me. I know I am loved by the love who moves the sun and the other stars and that he desires that I live for ever with him in heaven.

## CHRISTMAS TIMETABLE

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