CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST EDMUND OF CANTERBURY

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Sunday 29 November
Yr B

There will be a second collection for LIVING WELL

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

After a brief reflection on Advent, a season that leads us the celebration of Christmas, it is now necessary that we seek some basic understanding of what Christmas is, in order to prepare properly for the celebration.

What is Christmas for Catholics?
This might sound like a simple question — *what is Christmas?* — but it's a meaningful one for anyone who wants to understand its true origin and deeper significance.
For Catholics, Christmas is the celebration of the Incarnation—the moment when God entered human history by becoming man in Jesus Christ. It commemorates the birth of Jesus, true God and true man, who comes into the world not in power or wealth, but as a new born child.

While the world often emphasizes decorations, gifts, and social gatherings, the Church focuses on a deeper reality: God has drawn near to His people. Christmas celebrates God's infinite love made visible in the person of His Son.

What does the word "Christmas" mean?
The word *Christmas* comes from "Christ's Mass." At its heart, Christmas is a liturgical celebration cantered on the Eucharist, where Catholics gather to give thanks for the gift of Jesus Christ.

Rather than a cultural holiday alone, Christmas is a sacred feast that calls believers to awe, gratitude, and renewed faith as they contemplate the mystery of God becoming man for our salvation.

Is Christmas just one day?
No. Christmas is an entire liturgical season, not just December 25. The Christmas season begins on Christmas Day and continues through the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The Church invites Catholics to rejoice for days—not just hours—so they can fully reflect on the meaning of Christ's birth and its significance for their lives.

Why do Catholics celebrate Christmas on December 25?
The Church had began celebrating Christmas on December 25 by the 4th century. While this date is not claimed to be the exact historical day of Jesus' birth, it holds deep theological meaning.
December 25 was chosen to proclaim that Christ is the true Light of the world, entering into the darkness and bringing salvation. From its earliest celebrations, Christmas was never meant to be a simple historical re-enactment, but a living proclamation: God is with us.

Why does Christmas matter for Catholics?
Christmas matters because it reveals who God is and who we are.
At Christmas, Catholics celebrate these essential truths:
God is not distant. He becomes Emmanuel—*God with us*.
We are deeply loved. God enters our humanity to save us from within it.

Humility is the path to holiness. Christ comes quietly, teaching us gentleness, simplicity, and trust.
Hope conquers darkness. No matter how heavy the night, Christ's light shines through.
Christmas is not only about remembering something that happened 2,000 years ago. It is about welcoming Christ into our lives today and allowing Him to transform our hearts.

How do Catholics celebrate Christmas?
Catholics celebrate Christmas through prayer, liturgy, tradition, and charity.

Common Catholic practices include:
Attending Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day
The celebration of Mass places the birth of Christ at the centre of the season.

The Nativity Scene
Popularized by St. Francis of Assisi, the manger helps families meditate on the humility of Jesus, born into poverty for our sake.

Carols and Scripture
Sacred music and the Gospel accounts from Matthew and Luke draw believers into the mystery of the Incarnation.

Family Traditions and Works of Charity
Gift-giving reflects God's generosity, while caring for the poor reminds us that Christ came especially for the lowly and forgotten.

What is the heart of Christmas for Catholics?
At its core, Christmas proclaims one astonishing truth: God comes close.
He enters our world—not to condemn, but to save. The manger reveals God's tenderness and His desire to dwell with His people. Christmas invites Catholics to make room for Jesus in their hearts, just as Mary and Joseph did.

In welcoming Christ, we are offered hope, renewal, and the grace to begin again with Him.

Fr Boniface Arapa

SICK VISITS IN OUR PARISH

Dear family of God,
As part of the ministry and pastoral care in this parish, the priests, deacons and special ministers of the Eucharist are meant to be visiting the sick, the elderly, the house bound and families that may be undergoing some challenges. This is what Jesus Christ Himself did while on earth - caring for all. In our case the priest would, among all other things, do the anointing of the sick as pointed by St. James (James 5:14-15) in which he instructs anyone who is sick to "call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord". He states that the "prayer of faith" will save the sick person, the Lord will raise them up, and any sin they have committed will be forgiven. Deacons, and the other Eucharistic ministers would take Holy Communion to the sick and all the categories of people mentioned above, pray with them and also listen to their stories. This brings healing, comfort and hope to all the believers.
Here at St Edmund's however, the response to this ministry is so minimal as there are very few people asking for visits from us priests, the deacon and even the Eucharistic ministers, despite our availability, willingness and readiness to do this ministry.
It is for this reason that I am humbly requesting you to let us know of any parishioners who need a pastoral visit, so that we can arrange to visit, offering all the pastoral support earlier mentioned.
We would like to develop a list of our parishioners to be visited and to organize a rota for that, and would really appreciate if you could contact the office and give the names and contact details of those of our flock who would like to be visited. We are more than happy and willing to meet this pastoral need and would really appreciate your cooperation over this matter.

Thank you, Fr Boniface Arapa

PRAYERS FOR ARCHBISOPS JOHN AND RICHARD

Your prayers are asked for Archbishop John Wilson who had emergency surgery last weekend. It was successful but he will require time to recover and regain full strength.

Likewise for Archbishop Richard of Westminster Archdiocese who is in hospital.

MISSION CALENDAR 2027

The Missionary Sisters of St. Peter Claver will be at the church next weekend with their **Mission Calendar 2027**. The Sisters are raising funds to help provide food for girls from poor families at a boarding school established by the Diocese of Tunduru-Masasi in Tanzania.
Please support this worthy cause generously.

READERS FOR CHRISTMAS VIGIL & MIDNIGHT MASS
Thursday Night - 24 December

Several Readers are required for this Christmas Service which starts with the Vigil of Readings at 11.15 pm before proceeding to Mass at Midnight.
If you would like to read at these celebrations, please contact Rosemary by **email:** (r.ekong@ucl.ac.uk) or **text:** (07956 109465) as soon as possible.

ALTAR SERVER TRAINING
Sunday 10 January 2027

We will be running training sessions for new and current altar servers on Sunday 10 January 2027.

- Session 1 - Introduction and refresher training from 3pm - 3.45pm
- Session 2 - Master of Ceremony (MC) training from 4pm - 4.45pm

Registration forms are available in the Sacristy with further information on eligibility and what will be covered in the sessions.
Any questions please contact Ruth McConkey via beckenham@rcaos.org.uk.

TABLE SALE

Thank you to everyone who supported the Table Sale last Saturday: Table holders, volunteers and visitors.

The Table Sale was up against some major Christmas markets in Beckenham and so had a significantly lower footfall than normal. This, of course, affected the money raised, but meant that it was easy to move round the stalls and very comfortable to sit down with friends and catch up over a hot drink.

About £580 was raised. The Church Shop sold some of their lovely Christmas and Advent items and the CWL very kindly donated £100 of their takings to the church.

300 Club

Congratulations to the winners of the 300 Club draw for November.

Marie Burkinshaw	£100
Ticcy Colling	£50
Ann Higgs	£25

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION GROUP

This group is still in need of volunteer helpers to support and deliver the First Holy Communion programme. Why not make contact with the group leader to have an informal chat?
www.beckenhamfhc@rcaos.org.uk

CHRISTMAS CRAFT WORKSHOP
Saturday 12 December
Church Hall
1.30 – 4.30 pm

A young parishioner is hosting a Christmas crafts afternoon with refreshments and fun.
Perfect for families.
Make sure to pop down and support the afternoon.

THE LIGHT OF CHRIST
CHARISMATIC PRAYER MEETING
Wednesday 2 December

7.45 pm Praise and Worship
8.00 pm Holy Mass
Celebrant Fr Boniface Arapa

Followed by a talk/testimony from Roisin Doherty on YouTube from the Divine Mercy Conference in Dublin earlier this year. Come and join us if you wish to hear Good News.

WORLD YOUTH DAY 2027
CANDLE FUNDRAISING

We are a group of young people from Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Brixton, hoping to attend World Youth Day 2027 in Seoul, South Korea.

For us, this pilgrimage is much more than a trip. On previous pilgrimages, young people from our community have discovered their vocations, met their future spouses, and even gone on to become priests. We hope to give every young person the chance to experience something equally life-changing, regardless of their financial circumstances.

To help make this possible, we've been making handmade candles, which we'll be offering after Mass on Sunday 29th November. Any support would mean so much to us!

We are very happy to welcome this group to St Edmund's this weekend. Please give generously so they can reach their target.

SVP CHRISTMAS LUNCH
Monday 7 December 1.00 pm in the Hall

Booking is now open for the annual SVP Christmas lunch. There will be a full Christmas meal and some seasonal entertainment. No charge for those on a low income but a suggested donation of £15 for all others.

Please email beckenhamsvp@gmail.com or call / text/Whatsapp 07789 497 482 to let us know of dietary requirements or transport needs.

SVP GIFT CARD APPEAL FOR LOCAL FAMILIES IN NEED

SVP Beckenham has reached out to 10 local primary schools to offer a Sainsbury's gift card to those families in particular need. This year we hope to donate £5,000 via gift cards and would very much appreciate your support in getting to this total.

Donations can be made by bank transfer to:
60 60 04, 46076190, Ref: gift cards 2026.
Cash and cheques can be posted through the parish office door.

THANK YOU FROM DEACON SEÁN

On behalf of the people in Nankesido in Ghana, and of the trustees of the Nankesido Education and Welfare Trust, may I think you very warmly for your extremely generous donations in response to our recent appeal. The appeal raised nearly £4,000 and, because money goes a lot further in Ghana, this sum will enable us to make a big difference to many people of Nankesido and the surrounding area by paying for children and young people to attend school, college, or university, or to take up apprenticeships and vocational training, as well as in providing for medical and other needs of poor families. Your kindness really does make a big difference. Thank you all again.

Deacon Seán

PRAYING THE ANGELUS IN ADVENT

This Advent, Archbishop John is inviting us to join him in praying the Angelus every day. The Angelus has been a "cornerstone" of his own prayer life since he was a teenager.

The Angelus is traditionally prayed three times a day, at 6am, noon and 6pm, but if you cannot pray it precisely at these times, that is all right.

V. The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary:
R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.
Hail Mary...
V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord:
R. Be it done unto me according to Thy word.
Hail Mary...
V. And the Word was made Flesh: And dwelt among us.
R. Hail Mary...
V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:
Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

MASSES

Sun 29 Nov	**The First Sunday of Advent**
6.00 pm	Rita Costelloe RIP
8.00 pm	Ambrose Harper RIP
9.30 am	For the people
11.00 am	Mary Porta RIP & Estella Campos RIP
5.30 pm	Maureen Leahy (nee Howard)
Mon 30 Nov	**Feria**
10.00 am	Benefactors & Promoters of the Claver Sisters
6.30 pm	Merlyn Shackleton RIP
Tues 1 Dec	**Feria**
10.00 am	Benefactors & Promoters of the Claver Sisters
6.30 pm	Anne O'Shea RIP
Wed 2 Dec	**Feria**
10.00 am	John Hughes RIP
8.00 pm HALL	Charismatic Mass
Thurs 3 Dec	**St Francis Xavier**
10.00 am	Margaret Ziolek RIP (1st anniv)
6.45 pm	Peter Nunes d'Agrella RIP
6.00 pm CLAVER	Adoration & Benediction
Fri 4 Dec	**Feria**
10.00 am	Alice Ward RIP
Sat 5 Dec	**Feria**
10.00 am	Somotochukwu and Sochikaima Oti
11.30	Reconciliation for the First Holy Communion candidates
6.00 pm	Delisa & Crescenzo Panetta RIP
Sun 6 Dec	**The Second Sunday of Advent**
8.00 pm	Noreen Griffiths RIP
9.30 am	Bill and Patricia Ross RIP
11.00 am	For the people
5.30 pm	Noreen Griffiths RIP

EXPOSITION

Monday to Thursday and Saturday: 9-9.45 am
Thursday evening: 6-7 pm at Claver Convent
Friday: after morning Mass.

CONFESSION

Saturday after morning Mass until 11.30, and
Saturday evenings from 5.00 pm to 5.45 pm.

On occasion exposition will not take place owing to a funeral being held

MASS TIMES AT ST MARK'S, WEST WICKHAM

Weekdays
10.00 am daily (except Monday)
6.00 pm (Monday only)

Sunday Mass
8.00 am
10.00 am
11.30 am

MASS TIMES AT ST ANTHONY'S, ANERLEY

Monday to Saturday
9.30 am daily
Tuesday evenings at 7.30 pm

Saturday
6.00 pm Vigil Mass

Sunday Mass
9.30 am
11.15 am

WE PRAY FOR ALL OUR PARISHIONERS

Those who have just died: Caimin Lynch, Patrick Francis Dunn, Godfrey Linnett, Christope Dupuy, Noreen Smith.

Those whose anniversaries are at this time: Henry Alfred Jones, Siobhan Carly Smith, Anthony Leonard, Maria Etheridge, Evelyn Keeley

Those in ill health: Joe, Chris Elgar, Peter Anthony Jones, Katherine McLaughlin, Henry Ginn, Paul Hixson, Arlene Sinclair, Emma Rodrigues, Christine Parker, Don, Beatrice Allegretti, Yvonne Forshaw, Elizabeth Hardaker, Sheila Crozier, Margaret Arnold, Bishop John Keenan, Domenica Rasuro, Sergio De La Fuente, Judy Jaffer, Archbishop John Wilson, Archbishop Richard Moth.

And all those suffering with long term sickness.

May the Lord bless them and keep them – Amen.

If you know of any parishioner who is sick or housebound and who would welcome a visit from the clergy team, please make contact with one of them or call the Parish Office.

If a family member is in hospital please ask the ward staff to notify the hospital chaplain.

DIARY DATES

December

7 SVP Christmas Lunch
Law Surgery in Hall at 6.00 pm

12 Advent Carol Service at 7.15 pm followed by refreshments in the Hall.

19 Advent Reconciliation Service 4.00 pm
20 Family Carols at 3.00 pm

SILENT PRAYER

Silent prayer time in the Hall on Mondays from 5.30 - 6.20 pm

Every Monday (except second Monday and bank holidays).
John Main Christian Meditation Group

Second Monday
Quiet Monday (reaching out to other local churches) - see flyer in porch for details

Please note the need to arrive promptly and observe the group silence. Access is via stairs.

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES

Christmas Eve
4pm
6pm
8pm
Midnight (11.30pm)

Christmas Day
8am
9.30am
11.00am