

The Catholic Parish of Ongar & Doddingtonhurst



St. Helen's Catholic Church
The Presbytery
87 High Street
Chipping Ongar
CM5 9DX

Parish Priest:
Fr Emile Nkumu
Phone: 01277 362645
ongar@brcdt.org
www.catholicparishongar.org



www.dioceseofbrentwood.net



St. Margaret of Scotland
Doddingtonhurst Road
Doddingtonhurst
CM15 0QJ

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (B) & THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD Sunday 24th December, 2023

Samuel 7.1–5,8–12,14,16 Psalm 88 Romans 16.25–27 Luke 1.26–38

Samuel anointed the youngest of Jesse's sons, **David**, left with the sheep. When Gabriel is sent to Nazareth to a Virgin betrothed to Joseph. Mary's name is spelt out. **David and Mary** are among the most significant people in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Their key roles are simply the result of God's choice, entirely dependent on grace. When David wants to build a house for God, his offer is however dismissed.

'The Lord will make you a house.' Mary and David are invited to allow themselves to be instruments of God's plans – to simply co-operate with the grace abundantly given: 'Let what you have said be done to me.'

The house that God builds for David is a sovereignty that will always stand secure. And Mary will herself become the dwelling of the Most High. These important insights offered today reveal the way God works. Human beings can carry out their task as they receive the grace from above; God's plan will be realised through human acceptance and cooperation. As Christians awaiting the celebration of 'God with us', we can ponder these truths related to us too.

Keep yourself safe and well, Fr. Emile

**May the spirit of Christmas give you peace;
may the warmth of Christmas grant you love;
may the gladness of Christmas give you joy
and the blessings of Christ give you hope today and always.**

Christmas Blessing from Fr. Emile I would like to thank all the people of the parish for all your kind thoughts, prayers, gifts and cards sent to me. I hope you have a very healthy, safe and Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year 2024. Christmas Blessings for you and your families and may you find peace, to understand love and to give it. God Bless, Fr. Emile

Christmas Gifts for the housebound The St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) visited the care homes within our parish to gift out Christmas gifts in the last couple of weeks. Dudbrook House received 50 Christmas gifts and Howard Lodge received 68. Thank you to all who have donated to SVP in the past which enables us to do this. If you wish to support your local SVP group there are collection boxes in both churchs. Please see photo of visit on our website here

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Families of the Parish Thank you to all those who have helped at the Family Masses these last few months. Any more volunteers for the next few months will be very appreciated. We next have our Children of the Parish Christmas Eve Mass at St. Margaret's at 5.30pm. Then the next three Family Masses are 21st January, 18th February and 17th March. Also on 7th January Julia Fagan will be enrolled into the Guild of St Stephen as an altar server. Please, come and support her.

Christmas Offerings As is the custom, your offerings at the Christmas Masses are your personal gift to the parish priest. Offerings may be made at Mass or posted through the Presbytery door marked "Christmas" and also your Gift Aid Number or can use your Christmas Gift Aid Envelopes for those that have them. Cheques should be made payable to 'Catholic Church Ongar St Helens' and will be dealt with by the Parish Office. Alternatively please get in touch for the parish bank account details if you wish to make a bank transfer. When making a bank transfer please quote 'Christmas' as a reference. Please note due to finance regulations any standing order contributions cannot be part of the Christmas Collection unless specifically stated Christmas. Thank you very much for your very generous support.

Altar Servers Any person who has received Holy Communion is eligible to become an altar server. Please, let Fr Emile know if you would like to join a programme to become an altar server.

First Communion Programme Children who would like to prepare to receive Holy Communion need to register for the programme which will begin later in the year, Children need to be at least 7 years old (Year 3 in school or above). Please register with the Parish Office as soon as possible so that we can organise all the requirements. Any parent who is willing to assist as a catechist, please, speak to Fr Emile. **The deadline for submitting applications will be January 1st, 2024.**

Confirmations - The Confirmation preparation is for young men and women who are presently in year 11. It allows them to reflect on their own relationship with God and to explore with other young people some of the questions they may have about their faith. If there are any young people who would like to make their Confirmation next year 2024 please speak to Fr. Emile. Application forms available from Parish Office ongar@brcdt.org **The deadline for submitting applications will be Jan 1st, 2024.**

Whatsapp Group: If anyone would like to join the parish Whatsapp Group then please contact Denise Terry-Roberts at d.terryroberts@btinternet.com or on 07545 240064 for her to add your mobile number.

Brentwood Cathedral We are much looking forward to TRAJECTI VOCES a Dutch Choir returning to Brentwood Cathedral on their Christmas Tour of East Anglia. Their Choir of 77 will be performing here on Saturday 30th December at 12 noon. Come and listen to a variety of Festive Choral Music including Rutter, Bach and Willcocks. You are also invited to sing along to well known and much loved carols. The Recital will last 45 minutes and parking is available in the Cathedral on the basis of first come first served.

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 Abbottswick. 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.

SVP 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@svp.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.

Diocesan Directories 2024 are now available from the Parish Office for £2.95

St. Margaret's Hall Hire St. Margaret's is available for hire for private functions and parties, childrens parties, fitness classes, local groups and events holding up to 100 people at reasonable rates. If you would like more information or to make a booking please contact Kelly Love on 01277 362645, ongar@brcdt.org or whatsapp/msg 07929241350.

Mass Attendance: Dec 16/17 Sat 5.30pm: 41 Sun 8.45am: 27 Sun 10.30am: 34

Offertory Collection: £510.37

Bank Account Name/Cheques payable to: 'Catholic Church Ongar St Helens'
Please contact Kelly Love if you require bank account details.

For Gift Aid Envelopes please contact Bernard Adams 01277 823511

Thank you for your continued selfless generosity and support.

Please consider remembering the parish in your will. Thank you.

Mass Times and Intentions

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (B) (Expectant Mothers)

Sat 23rd Dec, 2023 (St. H) 5.30pm Maureen & Roy int.

Sun 24h Dec, 2023 (St. H) 8.45am Gary, Sarah, Rosie John-Lewis
(St. M) 10.30am People of the Parish

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD Solemnity

Sun 24th Dec, 2023 (St. M) 5.30pm **CHILDREN OF THE PARISH**
Alice Drew (Sue, John & Aimee Fahey)

(St H) 10.00pm **MIDNIGHT MASS**
NATIVITY OF THE LORD
Marianne Carmody

Mon 25th Dec, 2023 (St. H) 8.45am **CHRISTMAS DAY**
Lally Frank & Maria Falco (Paul Falco)

(St. M) 10.30am **CHRISTMAS DAY** Sr Fidelma Dixon int.

Tue 26th Dec, 2023 (Ilford) **ST STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR**
Feast Martena O'Sullivan

Wed 27th Dec, 2023 (St. H) 9.00am **ST JOHN, Ap, Ev**
Feast
Mary Burke

Thur 28th Dec, 2023 (St. H) 11.00am **THE HOLY INNOCENTS, Mm**
Feast
Jim and Anne Long

Fri 29th Dec, 2023 (St. H) 9.00am **ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY, Bp, m**
Patron of the Pastoral Clergy of England
National Feast
Tess Brophy

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH Feast

Sat 30th Dec, 2023 (St. H) 5.30pm **Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord** Birdle Cullinane

Sun 31st Dec, 2023 (St. H) 8.45am Patsy & Nancy Riordan
(St. M) 10.30am People of the Parish

Fr. Emile would like to welcome any parishioners for Tea/Coffee and a chat on Thursdays in the Presbytery after the 11am mass each week.

Prayer List: Please pray for all our parishioners who are sick and need the benefit of our love and prayers: Alan Chapman, Maureen Hamilton, Lucy Gay, Stephen Garfield and family, Susan Corbin and family, Sue Potter.