



Celebrating Advent 2025
in the Catholic Parish of
St Edward the Confessor, Romford

Including

Preparation for the
170th Anniversary of the Parish
1856 – 2026

An Advent of prayer, expectation, and service of the poor

Anniversaries matter in our lives – and for this parish church to be 170 years old, serving an ever growing community, is very significant. 2026 will be a year of celebration, service, prayer and thanksgiving, looking to the future and honouring the past. At the Christmas Masses there will be a whole range of “save the date” information for next year – please keep all the plans in your prayers.

As we prepare for such a year Advent is a good “warm up” as it is a natural time of preparation and anticipation. At the centre of it all is a pregnant teenager who is full of grace and also experiencing many of the joys, worries, hopes and struggles of any expectant mother. Mary carries in her womb a child who is both human and Divine: Jesus, whose birth can be beautifully described as **“the Infinite became an infant”**.

Jesus’ birth is in the midst of the ragged poverty of a family in a strange city, consigned to a stable because there is no room anywhere else. From the very start, Jesus is “at the edges”, walking with the poorest. We live in a world where billionaires and millionaires thrive, while others scrape a living on the brink. We can and must speak out about such injustice. In our own ways, we can also act to help those on the margins. There are several suggestions in this leaflet.

In a particular way during this Advent let yourself be inspired by *Dilexi te* (which translates as Jesus’ words, “I have loved you”). This is the first Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Leo XIV. It would be a wonderful Advent pathway to **take one of the Saints named by Pope Leo and walk with their story, prayer and insight.** The Saints are named in the box below. Some have been alive at the same time our church has been in Romford. Pick one you have never heard of, or one that you once knew from school or Confirmation and would love to rediscover. Take a little time with their story, each day of Advent, and see how they nudge you to some personal changes, and fresh ideas. Enjoy the journey!

With Advent Blessings, *Fr Dominic*

The amazing Saints of *Dilexi te* – Saints who walked amongst the poor

St John Chrysostom; St Francis of Assisi; St Clare of Assisi; St John of God; St Camillus de Lellis; St Vincent de Paul; St Louise de Marillac; St John of Matha; St Felix of Valois; St Peter Nolasco; St Raymond of Penafort; St Joseph Calasanz; St Jean Baptiste de la Salle; St Marcellin Champagnat; St John Bosco; St Katharine Drexel; St Josephine Bakhita; St John Baptist Scalabrini; St Frances Xavier Cabrini; St Mother Teresa of Calcutta; St Dulce of the Poor; St Charles de Foucauld

Advent Carols – three beautiful events

On Sunday 7th December at 3.00pm join our magnificent choir (who usually sing on a Sunday at 11.30am). They have won London wide awards, and will delight us with an hour of wonderful Christmas music; a mix of choir pieces, and choral favourites for you to join in with. Through the music they will tell the Christmas story. Hopefully this is an ideal time for those who may find it hard to get to evening events – and it will be followed by mince pies, tea, coffee and mulled wine in the parish centre. A truly lovely Advent moment.

On Wednesday 17th December at 7.00pm join Year 6 at St Peter's (Dorset Avenue, RM1 4JA) for an hour of joyful songs and music; refreshments afterwards.

Alternatively, also on Wednesday 17th December at 6.30pm all are welcome to the Campion school (Wingletye Lane, Hornchurch RM11 3BX), where the tremendous *Schola cantorum* will present an evening of Christmas carols.

Supporting those in greatest need at Christmas

Fair Trade Products and an eco-friendly Christmas



Look for the **Fair Trade mark** – especially on chocolate, wine, tea, coffee and sugar. With an Internet search you will find Fair Trade footballs, trainers, and cotton clothing. By buying Fair Trade you are supporting companies that make sure workers are paid fairly and have decent working conditions. The parish is nationally recognised for our work in “listening to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” through the **LiveSimply Award** which we attained in March 2025.

For the environment, the key is **reduce, reuse, recycle**. Could you buy and use less? Could you re-gift? Could you use less plastic? Wrap presents in cloths that you can use again?

Continuing to donate to the Food Bank

Take a copy of the new version of the “**reverse Advent calendar**” – buy an item a day. Food Bank donations can be offered at any time the church is open, in the side chapel.

“Gifts under the tree” – during the whole of Advent

We will have a tiny tree **throughout Advent**, and encourage gifts of toys, chocolate and toiletries. This will mean we can get them to families who we know are in need, including via S.M.I.L.E. and to those at the women's refuge. Items given on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are still very welcome, of course, and these will be given in the New Year.

Please do not wrap gifts but simply leave them unwrapped, or in gift bags.

Alternative Christmas Gifts

“**Alternative Gifts**” make amazing presents. Rather than another box of chocolates, or bottle of wine, give a gift that does immense good in another part of the world. Bees, goats, trees, seeds, school books, toilets and much more! The **Cafod “World Gifts”** selection is at www.worldgifts.cafod.org.uk The **Friends of the Holy Land** offer olive wood gifts from Bethlehem www.friendsoftheholylnd.org.uk/pages/shop/departments/christmas

Information from a wide range of charities is on the website:

<http://www.caritasbrentwood.org/resource/advent/>

Reconciliation Services

At St Edward the Confessor: Wednesday 10th December, 11.00am

At Corpus Christi, Collier Row: Tuesday 16th December, 7.00pm

All are very welcome. It may be years since you have been to confession – come and rediscover this beautiful and precious Sacrament, full of grace.

As usual, Fr Dominic is available for Reconciliation **each Saturday evening, 5.45 – 6.15pm**

The days before Christmas

Tuesday morning - Help with the Big Clean

Tuesday 23rd December, 10am – 12noon. Fuelled by festive snacks, become part of the parish cleaning team, so the church is sparkling for the Christmas Masses.

Tuesday afternoon – Rehearsal for Altar Servers

Tuesday 23rd December, 12pm – 1pm. For **all** our Altar Servers, a chance to brush up on skills, and learn some new aspects of serving.

New servers welcome (aged 8+ and have made your First Holy Communion).

For senior servers (Year 11+) there will be a brief extra rehearsal at 1pm, then lunch.

Wednesday afternoon – Join the Petals

Wednesday 24th December, 12noon – 3pm. Get in touch in advance with Julie Smith, via the parish office. Never arranged flowers before? Do not worry.

Come and help the Petals as they create their glorious garlands and festive phenomena!

Christmas Mass Times

CHRISTMAS EVE WEDNESDAY 24TH DECEMBER

5.00pm Mass especially for young children (Primary School age) and families*

7.00pm Mass for all – an additional Mass for Christmas Eve

10.00pm (9.30pm Carols) Mass for all, in the beautiful stillness of Christmas Eve*

CHRISTMAS DAY THURSDAY 25TH DECEMBER

9.30am Mass for all in the radiant joy of Christmas morning

11.30am Mass for all in the radiant joy of Christmas morning

***We expect the Christmas Eve 5pm and 10pm Masses to be very busy; when the church is at capacity there will be alternative seating in the Parish Centre, with the Mass Livestreamed to the big screen, and Communion brought to the hall.**