Catholic Parish of
St Edward the Confessor, Romford



Celebrating Advent 2026

Living lights of hope, peace, joy and love

Illuminating pathways to Christmas for our neighbours, friends and family; for ourselves, our town and the world

An Advent of light and peace

The Advent candles are like lights on a runway, guiding us home. Christmas Eve is full of the dazzling lights of angels. The Wise Men are guided by a star that has particular brightness.

During Advent it can be easy to be distracted by lights in shop windows; displays that will fade by Boxing Day. Instead, give generous time to follow the true guiding lights of hope, peace, joy and love. If we had to name what the world needs right now, it is surely these lights. In a particular way Pope Leo XIV focuses us on peace. In crowded and stressful shops, car parks, roads and town centres, let's be different. Let's consciously be people of peace. Help someone else who is struggling. Speak words of calm. Drive courteously, and walk gently in crowds. In our families, be a bridge-builder and peacemaker wherever that is most needed. In our giving, think about where and how our gifts reflect peace, and reflect Christ. That includes considering where and how things are made – there is much more about Fair Trade on the next page.

Be public about your Advent; put a crib in your window. Let friends, work colleagues and family know what matters to you about these weeks. Offer to pray grace at the work Christmas Dinner. Have a Nativity Scene as your computer screensaver when you are away from your desk, if you have that sort of job. Use the Post Office Nativity stamps and Christian Christmas Cards.

For we are called not only to follow those guiding lights of hope, peace, joy and love, but to live and be such light. Guiding others just as we are guided. Arriving at the Bethlehem stable to discover afresh the Light of the World.

With Advent Blessings, *Fr Dominic*

The Christmas Bazaar is on Saturday 5th December, 10am – 2pm. It is a week later than before, to be closer to Christmas. Please give it every possible support that you can. Look out for great Bazaar items and bring them to church in advance. On the day, support the Bazaar – invite friends and family too. Perhaps you can volunteer for part or all of the day? Let Annette know, via the parish office – there is always plenty to be done!

Remember that January to March will be different as our church is closed for redecorations. Please keep it all in prayer.

Advent Carols

On Wednesday 16th 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.

On Sunday 20th December at 3.00pm enjoy an hour with our magnificent choir (who usually sing on a Sunday at 11.30am). They will delight us with wonderful Christmas music; a mix of choir pieces, and choral favourites for you to join in with. 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 moment of joy, hope, peace and praise, just a few days before Christmas.

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 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 Or buy olive wood gifts from Bethlehem www.friendsoftheholyland.org.uk/pages/shop/department/christmas
Information from a wide range of charities is on the website:
https://www.caritasbrentwood.org/resource/advent/

Reconciliation Services

At St Edward the Confessor: Wednesday 9th December, 11.00am
At Corpus Christi, Collier Row: Thursday 17th 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 Friday Evening during Adoration, from 5.00 – 5.50pm, and each Saturday evening before Mass, 5.45 – 6.15pm**

The days before Christmas

Tuesday morning - Help with the Big Clean

Tuesday 22nd December, **10am – 11.30am**. Fuelled by festive snacks, become part of the parish cleaning team, so the church is sparkling for the Christmas Masses.

Tuesday lunchtime – Rehearsal for Altar Servers

Tuesday 22nd December, **11.30am – 12.30pm.** 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 12.30pm, then lunch.

Wednesday afternoon – Join the Petals

Wednesday 23rd December, **1pm – 5pm**. Get in touch in advance with Theresa Francis, via the parish office. Never arranged flowers before? Do not worry.
Come and help the Petals as they create their amazing arrangements and divine displays!

Christmas Mass Times

CHRISTMAS EVE THURSDAY 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 FRIDAY 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.**