Gaudete-Rejoice! This is the instruction we are given at the beginning of Mass today. But what do we have to rejoice about? The Gospel presents us with the rather odd figure of John the Baptist. The Lord proclaims that no greater man than he has been born. It’s clear that John the Baptist has much to rejoice about. What entitles him to this great honour?

John the Baptist was on the edge. His diet and his dress sense were weird, his living environment less than desirable. These things matter little to John. He was quite clear about his mission, and that was his sole focus. He was tasked with preparing the hearts of the people to receive the great joy of the Messiah. He preached to them a clear message of repentance, that they must turn away from sin so that they can recognise him when he comes. He gave them a baptism of repentance, a symbol of their liberation from the slavery of sin, which made them ready to greet their Redeemer. People flocked to him to listen and to be baptised. He fulfilled his task with great zeal and passion.

At this time John is in prison. But you cannot imprison someone who has truly repented with a full heart. Even though John cannot see the Lord face to face, he is able to recognise him through the thick walls of a prison. The words conveyed to him by the Lord most certainly would make John rejoice.

Repentance is a huge problem for us because it demands we examine every aspect of our lives. There are lots of areas where we are simply not ready for repenting. It’s painful for us to break free from patterns of sin that seem to give us comfort and make us happy. We think we will miss them and suffer without them. There are lots of things in our lives that we don’t want to admit are sinful, and sometimes when we look at the extent of our sinfulness we can become disheartened, and think that repentance is pointless. It is, however, necessary if we desire to receive our Saviour. God’s grace and the fellowship of each other spurs us on to true repentance. We have the great comfort of God’s mercy which means we don’t need to languish in slavery to sin. We’re right on the threshold of our complete happiness. We’re on the very edge of true joy.

This Sunday reminds us that, like John the Baptist, we’re on the edge. We need to edge our way closer to true repentance because that’s where we find our joy. Our salvation is a work in progress. Let’s continue through Advent to encourage each other in prayer both to repent and rejoice.
Mass Times & Intentions
Saturday 14th December (First Mass of Sunday)
18.00 Dan Doody RIP
Sunday 15th December – 3rd SUNDAY OF ADVENT
08.30 People of the Parish
10.00 Annie Donovan (Anniv)
11.30 Mary & Tony Mills (Anniv)
Monday 16th – Advent feria
09.30 Sister Teresa Geohegan (Sick)
Tuesday 17th – Advent feria
09.30 Sue Gunovsky (Sick)
Wednesday 18th – Advent feria
19.00 Mary Rodrigues RIP, Olinda Mesquita RIP & Assumption Fernandes RIP
Thursday 19th – Advent feria
09.30 Patrick Bowles (Anniv) & Helen Foley RIP
Friday 20th – Advent feria
09.30 Maureen Buckley RIP
(St. John Fisher School at Mass)
Sacrament of Reconciliation: Sat 17.15-17.45

Please note St. John Fisher School will be attending Mass on Friday, 20th December at 9.30am.

Please keep the sick in your prayers. A list of sick parishioners is displayed on the notice board at the back of the Church.

Recently Deceased, Alison Davis, Paul Cleland, John Tyrrell.
Pray Also For, Annie Donovan, Mary & Tony Mills, Patrick Bowles, Kåre Bjørnerud, Virginia Cabral Francisco, Waclaw Kowalewicz, Frank Beasley, Virginia Dellamura, Bridie Haynes, Nora Egan, Ying-Eng Kit, Manuel Rodrigues, Brendan Connolly and Christopher Hilton whose anniversaries occur at this time.

Christmas Mass Times
Christmas Eve 24th December
5.00pm Family Mass
10.30pm Lessons and Carols followed by Mass

Christmas Day 25th December
08.30am Mass
10.00am Children’s Mass
11.30am Mass

St Stephen’s Day 26th December
11.00am Mass

For the rest of Christmas the Mass schedule will take place at the usual times except on Friday, 27th December at 7.00pm (no Morning Mass) and Wednesday, 1st January 2014 at 11.00am (no Evening Mass).

Christmas Offering Attached to this week’s newsletter is an envelope in which you can make a Christmas Offering for Fr Shaun. These offerings support him in his ministry here in the Parish and they will be collected over the Masses of Christmas. Thank you for your kindness and generosity at this time.

‘Lights of Life’ Christmas Tree Please fill in a card if you so wish and put it in the box (near St. Anthony statue). Your card will be put on the tree from this weekend. A memory book is also available to write the names of those you wish to remember.

Car Parking Arrangements whilst building works are in progress
The Car Park will be closed from 6th January 2014 to facilitate major building works to the Church. On Sundays, Saturdays and on special occasions every endeavour will be made to open the Car Park for genuine visitors to the Church, but the area available for car parking will be reduced on grounds of safety. We apologise for any inconvenience caused by the closure of the car park.

Bethany Group Next meeting on Thursday, 19th December at 7.30pm in the Sacristy room.

Christmas Coffee Morning Today after the 10am and 11.30am Mass we shall be serving traditional Christmas food and drink, selling raffle tickets for the wonderful Harrods Hamper, “guess the weight” of the Christmas cake and much more! So, do come along with family and friends and join in the Christmas festivities and enjoy a slice of Christmas cheer in the small hall. All proceeds towards the replacement of the Altar Servers alb.

CAFOD Traidcraft Food & Christmas Card Stall Open this weekend after all masses in the Church porch and in the Church hall at the coffee morning after the 10am and 11.30am Masses.
‘The Pylon’ The Christmas Edition of our exciting Parish magazine is now available at the back of the church. Price £1 (please put money in ‘Papers’ box). Please buy a copy and support our advertisers who are all parishioners.

Christmas Posters The Christmas Posters are here. Please collect your poster from the Church porch.

Churches Together in North Harrow The Christmas greetings cards are now available for distribution. Please collect your pack from the Church Porch.

Google Groups We are setting up an electronic email which will contain the Parish Newsletter. This will be sent to all who are registered and who have given us an email address. If you wish to opt out, please let us know and remember to make sure to ease it from the spam report if it should end up there.

St. John Fisher Social Club The Club bar will be closed on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve.

St. John Fisher Recipe Book One of our parishioners has come up with a marvellous idea. It is proposed that we create a St John Fisher recipe book. The idea is that people give us their recipes and write a paragraph or two about where the recipe came from. This might be something about the person who gave you the recipe or it could be a cultural reference such as food that is cooked to celebrate a particular event in your home country. You might submit a recipe as an individual or as a family. As we have parishioners from all around the world this could be an exciting project so please send your recipes in and include cooking times, cooking temperature and the method of how to make the dish. We already have someone who has volunteered to do the illustrations for the book, so now we would like help especially in the production of the book. If you have experience in using Microsoft Publisher or another publishing programme please let Fr. Shaun or Kay know. We would have the book professionally printed and then sell it in order to raise funds for the re-ordering. If all goes well we would like to have the book ready by the time of next year’s International Day. In the meantime, please send your recipes to harrownorth@rcdow.org.uk.