

CATHEDRAL OF ST MARY & ST HELEN HOLY CROSS AND ALL SAINTS

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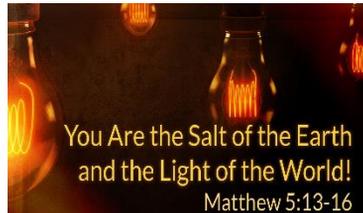
Website: www.brentwoodcathedral.org.uk

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A)

Sunday, 8 February 2026

Spiritual Reflection:

‘Oh, they are salt of the earth,’ we often say when we are referring to a person who is straightforward, honest and without guile. Another common saying in the same vein is ‘what you see is what you get’. In today’s reading, Jesus’ description of his disciples as ‘the salt of the earth’ would have struck a chord and meant something very specific to his listeners.



In Jesus’ day salt was a valuable commodity. To preserve food from decay in the heat salt was applied as a preservative. It also served to enhance flavour of the food. The ancient tradition of salting the sacrificial offerings denoted a purifying function. It was perhaps for this reason that new-born babies were rubbed with salt to denote purification of the addition to God’s people and as a reminder of the covenant.

Those who heard Jesus speak would have understood the meaning and tradition behind the idea of being ‘salt of the earth’. In the same way as salt prevents decay and corruption, so the witness of Spirit-led Christians protects society from decay and corruption. It also adds much

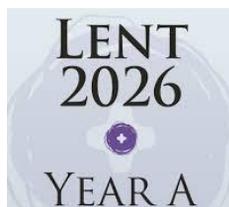
needed flavour to society. And, drawing on the idea that too much salt in our food can make us thirsty. St. Augustine once wrote: 'O Heavenly Father, you have put salt into our mouths that we may thirst for you.' The work of the Holy Spirit is to create within us a thirst for the things of God: for union with God, communion with him and for grace to live a life which is holy and pleasing to him. When Jesus said 'I thirst' from the cross, his thirst wasn't just physical, it was spiritual - God thirsts that we come into his presence as we long to come into him.

Jesus also calls us to be 'the light of the world'. In this way we are to be like our Master, for in John 8:12 Jesus describes himself as 'the light of the world'. We are to be countercultural, signs of contradiction, heralds of the gospel of life in the world which, in so many respects, has lost its way.



Dear Friends in Christ,

As the Holy Season of Lent rapidly draws close once again, I would like to invite all our parishioners to truly enter the spirit of the season. The Church in her wisdom gives us these special seasons of the year to focus our minds and hearts into those most powerful moments in the Life of Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Lent is known as a Penitential Season, which means that we avail ourselves of every opportunity for 'change of heart.' This can be achieved in many ways: Firstly, by acknowledging our sins and celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation (we call this fulfilling our Easter duties - we have from Ash Wednesday to Trinity Sunday to celebrate the Sacrament); Secondly, by trying to attend additional masses during the week. Thirdly, by participating in the traditional devotion for Lent, the Stations of the Cross, at least once a week. Fourthly, by attending the 4 Lenten Lectures 25th February, 4th, 11th, 18th March. Fifthly, by making little sacrifices through fasting (Fridays of Lent are Fast Days), or giving up some luxury during Lent as a form of fasting.



SERIES OF LENTEN LECTURES: As we are about to enter the Lenten Season, and Ash Wednesday is only 10 days away, **18th February**, it gives me great pleasure to inform you that I have secured four speakers this year for our Lenten Talks. The theme of our talks this year is: What does it truly mean to be Catholic?

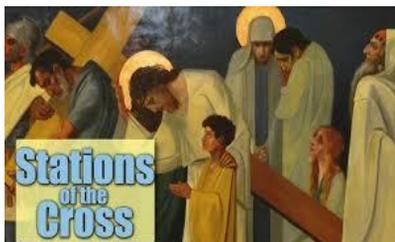
Talk 1: *Wednesday, 25th February* - Abbot Hugh Allan, O Praem. “I Believe...” Living and Proclaiming the Catholic Faith.

Talk 2: *Wednesday, 4th March* - Rev Msgr Kevin W Hale, VG. Being Catholic and the call to holiness as seen in the lives of some recently canonised saints.

Talk 3: *Wednesday, 11th March* - Mr Mauro Iannicelli. Prayer as the Foundation of our Catholic Life.

Talk 4: *Wednesday, 18th March* - Rev Msgr John Armitage. The uniqueness of Catholicism for British Society.

All the Lenten Talks will take place in the Parish Hall, commencing at 7.30pm. Please do avail yourselves of the opportunity to hear these gifted speakers. What better way to truly enter the Holy Lenten Season!



TRADITIONAL DEVOTIONS FOR LENT - STATIONS OF THE CROSS:

Will take place on each *Friday Evening* during Lent at **7.00pm**, also on *Sunday afternoon* at **5.00pm**. This Lenten Devotion retraces the last day of Jesus' life on Good Friday. Step by step, we journey with the Lord as he makes his

way to Calvary and His Crucifixion. This is a beautiful spiritual journey, that we are privileged to make with Our Blessed Lord. Because Jesus is making this sacrifice of his own life on behalf of the whole of sinful humanity. He truly becomes the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” If you have never prayed this devotion before, I really would encourage everyone to at least come on one occasion and join us for this devotion.

THE RITE OF ELECTION: This year there will be twelve Catechumens and Candidates for the Easter Sacraments. The Rite of Election will take place on the First Sunday of Lent **22nd February 2026 at 3.00pm**. This is when all the RCIA catechumens & candidates throughout the Diocese of Brentwood gather at the Cathedral and are formally accepted and presented to Bishop Alan. I would like to



commend all our catechumens and candidates to your prayers over the Lenten Season, as they continue in their final preparations for the reception of the Easter Sacraments. This is truly a great moment in their lives of faith, when they become one with us through faith and of course, receive Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist for the first time.

NEW ENQUIRERS FOR SEPTEMBER 2026: Each year we run the RCIA Journey of Faith Programme. If you know of anyone who may be interested in learning more about the Roman Catholic Faith, possibly with the view of receiving the Easter Sacraments, please contact Fr John at Clergy House Tel No: 01277 265 235. Fr John will be only too happy to explain what is involved in the RCIA Programme and the commitment in faith that is involved.

IRREGULAR MARRIAGES: An Irregular Marriage is one that has taken place outside of the Catholic Church without dispensation. For example: Marriages in hotels, and secular venues, on beaches or Las Vegas; marriage in a non-Catholic Church without dispensation from the Bishop. These marriages are not recognised by the Catholic Church, and therefore are non sacramental & irregular. But there is a facility in the Church to rectify these situations called a Convalidation (this is a strictly private facility that is offered by the church). As marriage and family life is what I specialised in while studying Canon Law, if anyone wishes to speak to me confidentially please don't hesitate to contact me at Clergy House: Tel No: 01277 265235

PARISH REPOSITORY: This is our little religious shop on the Narthex of the Cathedral. We have a selection of religious good and cards for all occasions. Prayer Books, Children's Books, rosaries, statues, medals, holy pictures. Also we are able to order in anything you request, either speak to Margaret Walker, or one of the Repository helpers on duty at the various masses each week.

RCIA PROGRAMME - JOURNEY OF FAITH: Continues *Thursday, 12th February 2026*. Please do keep our twelve enquirers in your thoughts and prayers, especially as they make the very important decision to be received into full communion with the Roman Catholic faith at Easter 2026. Theme: *The Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit*.



BAPTISMS: If there are parents wishing to have their children baptised at Brentwood Cathedral, could you kindly contact the Parish Office as soon as possible. For first time parents there is a Baptismal Preparation Programme run by Fr Matúš. Baptisms take place on Saturdays at 11.00am & 12.00 Noon, and Sundays at 1.00pm.

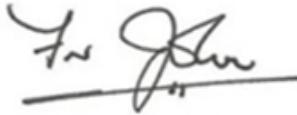
THE NEXT CHAPTER OF CANONS MASS will take place in the Cathedral on ***Monday, 9th February at 10.30am.*** All are very welcome to attend. Please note, this Mass will be in place of the 9.15am morning Mass.

PLEASE PRAY for the repose of the soul of Charlotte Donnelly who died recently, aged 98. Charlotte was a member of the parish for 62 years predominately at Holy Cross Warley, where she managed the Children's Liturgy group for 25 years and was involved in the Holy Cross and All Saints Ladies Fellowship Group. Funeral details to be advised.

CALLUM STONE RIP: Callum's funeral will take place in The Cathedral at ***11.00am on Friday, 13 February.***

LUNCHTIME MUSIC RECITAL Please join us on ***Wednesday 11th February*** at ***1.00 p.m.*** for a piano recital to be given by Anastasiia Matsko.

May God bless you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. John", written over a horizontal line.

NATIONAL MARRIAGE WEEK - Saturday, 7th - Saturday, 14 February: Please pray for all those living out the vocation to marriage and couples preparing to marry. Support is available for those who need it, and your parish priest can point you in the right direction. If you are celebrating a significant anniversary this year, please let your parish know so that you can be invited to the Mass of Thanksgiving in the Cathedral on ***Saturday, 11th July.***

CAFOD'S WORK IN UKRAINE Join us to find out about CAFOD's work in Ukraine and the 2026 Lent Fast Day appeal.

Josie O'Reilly will talk about CAFOD's Ukraine Emergency Programme and Jane Crone from CAFOD in Brentwood will talk about the Lent Appeal.

Saturday, 14 February 2026 at The Beckett Centre, St Thomas of Canterbury Church, 557-559 High Rd, Woodford, Woodford Green IG8 0SG

Starting at 11.00am (with coffee from 10.45am). Finishing around 1.00pm.

CREDIT CARD PAYMENT TERMINAL - While the credit card terminal is being repaired, I would ask that you please use the QR codes (which are posted on the noticeboard in the Narthex) to make your donations. Thank you.

COFFEE AFTER 9.30 MASS TODAY will be hosted by The Altar Servers. Next week will be the turn of SVP. All are welcome, so please do join us.

THE FRIDAY FRIENDSHIP LUNCH Every Friday all are welcome to come along to the parish hall (**12 noon - 2.00pm**) for a soup lunch, cakes and drinks and most importantly, friendly faces and an opportunity to meet up with others.

CHARISMATIC PRAYER GROUP will meet again on **Thursday, 12th February from 7.00pm - 8.30pm**. Everyone is welcome so please do feel free to join us for prayer and praise.

MASS TIMES in the Cathedral:

SATURDAY VIGIL MASS at 6.30pm

SUNDAY: 8.00am / 9.30am / 11.30am & 6.30pm

WEEKDAY MASSES Monday to Friday at 9.15am

SATURDAY: 9.15am

THE HOLY HOUR of prayer and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament takes place on a **Monday evening from 6.30 - 7.30pm**. and will be preceded by the **ROSARY for Ukraine and peace in our world at 6.10 p.m.**

PILGRIMS OF HOPE PRAYER GROUP - Why not join the parish Pilgrims of Hope prayer group? It couldn't be easier. The group pray **every Monday evening at 8.00pm**. Prayers and reflections are shared on a WhatsApp group with each person praying privately wherever they find themselves. If you'd like to join the WhatsApp group then please give your mobile number and name to the parish secretary.

SICK & HOUSEBOUND PARISHIONERS: If there are any sick of housebound parishioners that would like a visit from one of the priests please contact Clergy House Tel No: 01277 265 235. We can also arrange for Holy Communion to be brought to your homes on a regular basis.

THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK is available to anyone who is gravely ill or about to have an operation, so if you know someone who should receive this important sacrament then please speak to a member of the clergy or ring the parish office on 01277 265 235.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION is available in the Cathedral on Saturdays from 10.00 - 11.00am. Confessions in Italian are also offered.

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR SICK and housebound parishioners and friends, including: Sylvia Allum, Merle Anderson, Suzie Anderson, Alistair Bailey,

Yvonne Ball, Hermine Bayley, Heidi Brenke, Eda Bright, Roisin Cassels, Esmeralda Chester, Keith Chester, Dermot Dalton, David, Iris Davis, Patricia Decup, Sheila Deed, Margaret F, Rebecca Florendo, Angela Gavin, Brian Hodgkins, Deacon Nicholas Holmes, Wong Su Hwa, Jess, Lisa Landy, Suzie Law, Lawrence, Peter Madden, Romek Matyszczyk, Tony Maule, John McCarthy, Carmel Micallef, Stephanie Murray, Harry Newman, Barney O'Driscoll, Joe O'Herlihy, Liam O'Herlihy, Steven Poole, Margaret Ross, Geraldine Sheehan, Robin Shenton, David Spring, Mary Stretch, Tim, TCT, Siobhan Vaughan, Michael Wilson, Kalcho Yankov and all our sick.

JUST FOR INFORMATION: Clergy days off are Tuesday (Fr John) and Wednesday (Fr Matúš). If you need to contact them at these times, please leave a message and they will call you back when they are able.

LOURDES WITH OUR DIOCESE: Would you like to join our bishop and parishioners and clergy from around the diocese on our annual pilgrimage to Lourdes this summer? The dates are **Friday, 17th - Friday, 24th July**. Please visit <https://tangney-tours.com/brentwood> for further information and to book, or contact Deirdre Pembroke, lourdes@brcdt.org if you have any questions. Paper booking forms to follow.

ST JOHN BOSCO CHILDREN'S CAMP - an amazing volunteer opportunity for this summer. If you are in school year 12 or student age (or any age over 17!) you are very welcome to apply at www.boscocamp.co.uk. The application process includes references and a DBS check, which we can help with, as well as a training and support before and during Camp. The Camp provides over 100 children a week with a summer holiday - for many their only holiday. As a volunteer you use your skills in assisting with different sporting and fun activities, as well as the practical aspects of camp life. **Volunteer for Saturday, 25th July - Saturday, 1st August or Saturday, 1st - Saturday, 8th August.** The Camp is a special work of Caritas Diocese of Brentwood, and also seeks financial donations - all information on the website.

ST HELEN'S CATHOLIC INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL: NURSERY OPENING

Our infant school is actively seeking support from the local community to resource its new nursery, ready for its opening in September 2026. The school now has an Amazon Wishlist which is solely dedicated to resourcing the nursery. If you would like to show your support to the exciting addition to our infant school and parish community, the link to the list is: https://www.amazon.co.uk/registries/gl/owner-view/CE4GY31VU4JM?ref_=gr_universal_landing_ggr

ST HELEN'S CATHOLIC INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL: NURSERY APPLICATIONS 2026-27

The nursery admission round is now open for parents of children to apply for a nursery place for the academic year that starts in September 2026. The application form is available on the school website and applications must be made directly to the school. The closing date for applications is: *Friday, 20th March 2026*.

VACANCY - HEAD TEACHER, ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, HORNCHURCH

The Governors of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Hornchurch, are seeking to appoint an inspirational and dedicated Head Teacher. Closing date: *Friday, 6th March 2026 at 5pm*. Interview Date: *Friday, 20th March 2026*. Enquiries can be made by email to admin@stmcps.co.uk, or phone 01708 448430.

VACANCY: EXAM INVIGILATOR - SHENFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

is looking for flexible, reliable people to join our Exam Invigilation Team and support students during exams. The role offers flexible hours at peak times throughout the academic year and is a great way to give back to your local school. No experience required – full training provided.

For more information about the role, please visit www.shenfield.essex.sch.uk/about-us/vacancies alternatively please contact e.kirk@shenfield.essex.sch.uk

RETRouvaille MARRIAGE HELP

- Retrouvaille helps couples find hope and healing for their marriage. Next date: *Thursday, 12 February*. www.retrouvaille.org.uk Tel: 07887 296983

BCCS AFTERNOON TEA

- The Brentwood Catholic Children Society is delighted to kick off the year with an invitation to Afternoon Tea. Hosted in the opulent surroundings of the Roslin Beach Hotel in Southend-on-Sea on **Tuesday 17th February 2026 (13:30-15:30)**.

Tickets are £35 per person - for more information or to book your place search [//www.bccs.org.uk/get-involved/events/](http://www.bccs.org.uk/get-involved/events/) or contact Julie Abbott on 07912277413 or jabbott@bccs.org.uk

QR CODES and CONTACTLESS GIVING A new online donation system has been set up so that parishioners and visitors are now able to donate by using a QR code directly to the Parish; donations can be made either with or without gift aid using the QR codes below or by scanning those displayed around the Cathedral:



Please treat as gift aid donation, all qualifying gifts of money made from the date of this declaration. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that, if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Donate £3.00	Donate £5.00	Donate £10.00	Donate £20.00

Donate without Giftaid-it

If you are unable to donate with Giftaid-It then please use the codes below.

Donate £3.00	Donate £5.00	Donate £10.00	Donate £20.00