



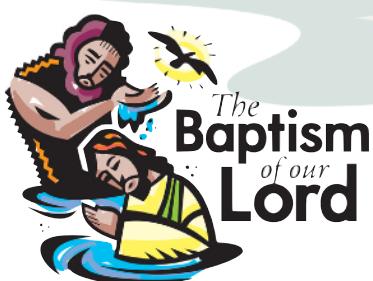
ST FRANCIS PARISH

NEWSLETTER



Mass @ 11.00 am St Francis of Assisi – Before Mass each Saturday @ 5.15 pm The Sacrament of Reconciliation – Parish Rosary at 5:30, (Please contact Fr Felix directly to book a date/time for reconciliation)
(Tel 01787 472477 / halstead@brcdt.org).

Date	Time & Location	Intentions
Saturday 10th January 2026 St William	6pm Vigil Mass	Health and wellbeing of all our parishioners
Sunday 11th January 2026 Baptism of the Lord	9am Mass St Nicholas	Health and wellbeing of all our parishioners
Sunday 11th January 2026 Baptism of the Lord	11am Mass Halstead	Health and wellbeing of all our parishioners
Monday 12th January St Aelred of Rievaulx	No Mass	
Tuesday 13th January St Hilary, Bishop	No Mass	
Wednesday 14th January	No Mass	
Thursday 15th January 2026	No Mass	
Friday 16th January	No Mass until 24th January	



First reading: Isaiah 42: 1-4, 6-7

Second reading: acts 10: 34-38

Gospel: Matthew 3: 13-17



IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT:

- Please return the clergy collection envelops and put in the collection box.
- I will be away for my brother's funeral after Christmas and back in the second week in January. Meanwhile Fr Frank Jackson will cover our Masses.
- Wishing all parishioners a joyful Christmas and A Happy and prosperous New Year.
- Our Parish Youth Club takes place on the last Saturday of the month. It is open to ages 5-18.
- We are calling for sponsorship for the sanctuary lights for 2026. Write your intention and hand it over to Fr Felix.
- The parish has a Facebook page that gets updated daily with Mass readings and other items of information, consider having a look at it.

<https://www.facebook.com/Stfrancishalsteadparish/>

- If you recently joined our parish, we would like to have your name registered in our records. Please pick up a form at the back, fill it and return it to me or drop it at the back of the church.
- It will be beneficial for you to identify with an aspect of our parish life by committing your time and resources to the good of our parish. We need reinforcements on our volunteer team. If you would like to join our Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Eucharist, please speak to Fr. Felix.
- It is a wholesome thought to pray for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:46). Consider offering a Mass for your departed loved ones and also for the living. Pick a form at the church's back and fill out your intentions.

- There is a chance for communion of the sick at homes for the housebound. Please let me know if any parishioners require a visit.
- It costs approximately £4,000 monthly to run our parish. Please consider sending an offering or a standing order to the parish. You can also make a donation to St. Francis of Assisi Church. Sort code: 40-13-22. Account Number: 71387014
- Everyone is welcome to participate in the Sanctuary Light sponsorship for 2026. You have the option to contribute £5.00 towards our weekly prayers for your specific intentions. Many thanks to those who signed up last year.
 - Votive: £12.58
 - 6pm: £123
 - 9am: £157.87
 - 11am: £167.10
- Many thanks for your generosity to the parish.
- The Holy Water font is now available for us to use. From the tap, take some home for your use. Before using, please let Fr. Felix know. Feel free to bless yourself with the Holy Water font; however, sanitise your hands before use to minimise the risk of possible infection

For your diaries:

- Youth Club: Every Last Saturday of the Month. Next one is coming up in the New Year
- Coffee morning on Friday from 10am to midday

Why did Jesus, the Sinless One, submit himself to John's baptism at the River Jordan? John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). In this humble submission of Jesus we see a foreshadowing of the "baptism" of his bloody death upon the cross. Jesus' baptism is the acceptance and the beginning of his mission as God's suffering Servant (Isaiah 42:1-4). He allowed himself to be numbered among sinners. Jesus submitted himself entirely to his Father's will. Out of love he consented to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins. Do you know the joy of trust and submission to God?

Jesus' baptism - beginning of a new creation

The Father proclaimed his entire delight in his Son and spoke audibly for all to hear. The Holy Spirit, too, was present as he anointed Jesus for his ministry which began that day as he rose from the waters of the Jordan river. Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all who come to believe in him. At his baptism the heavens were opened and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, signifying the beginning of a new creation.

Heaven will open for those who bow before the Lord

How can we enter into the mystery of Jesus' humble self-abasement and baptism? Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389 AD), an early church father tells us:

"Let us be buried with Christ by Baptism to rise with him; let us go down with him to be raised with him; and let us rise with him to be glorified with him."

Do you want to see your life transformed in the likeness of Christ? And do you want to become a more effective instrument of the Gospel? Examine Jesus' humility and ask the

Holy Spirit to forge this same attitude in your heart. As you do, heaven will open for you as well.

The Holy Spirit transforms us in the likeness of Jesus

The Lord Jesus is ever ready to renew and refashion us in his likeness through the gift and working of the Holy Spirit - and he anoints us for mission as ambassadors of his kingdom of righteousness (moral goodness), peace, and joy (Romans 14:17). We are called to be the "light" and salt" of his kingdom that radiate the beauty and aroma of his mercy and goodness to those around us (Matthew 5:13,15-16). The Lord Jesus wants his love and truth to shine through us that many others may find new life, freedom, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Ask the Lord Jesus to fill you with his Holy Spirit that you may radiate the joy of the Gospel to those around you.

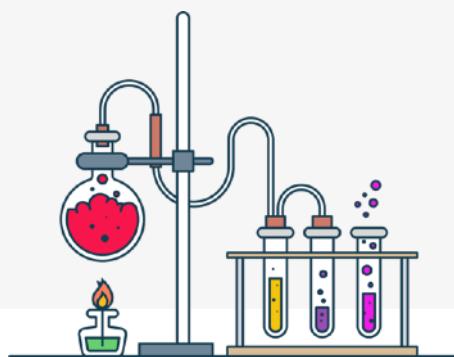
Lord Jesus, fill me with your Holy Spirit and with the fire of your love and goodness. May I always find joy and delight in seeking to please you in doing your will just as you have delighted in the joy of pleasing your Father and doing his will.

Along the Jordan's slow and sacred flow,
John calls the lost to turn their hearts anew;
The desert listens as the waters glow,
Awaiting One the prophets long foreknew.
Then Jesus comes where penitent souls stand,
Steps into waves that cleanse both flesh and soul;
The Baptist trembles, yields his guiding hand,
As heaven moves toward its hidden goal.

The skies are torn; the Spirit, dove-like, falls,
A sign of peace on rippling, humbled air;
The Father's voice through time and water calls:
"My Son, Beloved, marked by holy care."
Thus in the stream, the Christ is plainly
shown—
God enters flesh, and claims the world
His own.



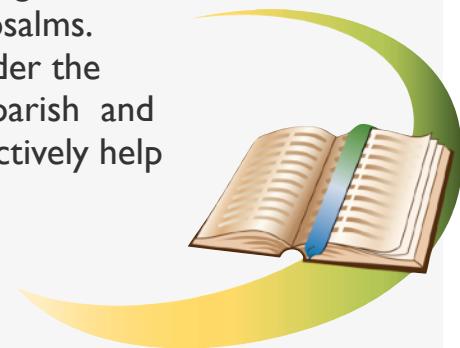
Creating science as a religion ultimately lets its adherents down because it asks science to do a job it was never meant to do. Science is a powerful method for investigating the natural world, but it is not a source of meaning, moral guidance, or ultimate purpose. When elevated to a belief system, it can create false expectations—that every important question has, or will have, a purely empirical answer. This leaves people ill-equipped to grapple with ethics, suffering, beauty, or love, which cannot be measured or replicated in a lab. Moreover, turning science into an unquestionable authority undermines its own strength: healthy science depends on skepticism, humility, and revision, not dogma. When dissent is treated as heresy rather than inquiry, scientific culture risks becoming rigid and ideological. In the end, scientism narrows human understanding, reducing rich dimensions of experience to data points, and leaves adherents with answers that are precise, yet often existentially incomplete.



Medjugorje Web

BIBLE GROUP meeting 21st January 2pm.
9 Cambridge Ave. Sible Hedingham. This is an opportunity to meet and discuss our faith, through bible readings and psalms. Plus we consider the needs of our parish and how we can actively help to contribute.

New members welcome
07702244880



The First Holy Communion group will be meeting at 9.30 am on Saturday 17th January at the Parish Hall / Presbytery. Please keep our group in your prayers as they continue on their journey towards the Sacrament in June.

If you have any quality used items (or unwanted Christmas gifts!) which could be sold at a 'pre-loved' or jumble sale, **please keep them safely at home** until the new storage shed has been built behind the church, thank you.