

Fr Richard Duffield

**ORATORIAN COMMUNITY
PETERGATE HOUSE
11, HIGH PETERGATE
YORK. YO1 7EN**

LANDLINE: 01904 624767 * MOBILE: 07941 397245

Saturday, 1 October, 2016

*To the Parishioners of St Joseph's and St Wilfrid's, York
from Fr Richard Duffield, Parish Priest*

It is a privilege and a joy for the York Oratory-in-Formation to be beginning a new ministry at St Joseph's. Our small community is very grateful to Bishop Terry and to the Diocese of Middlesbrough for the confidence they have placed in us. We know we follow on from some great priests – many of whom we have now got to know well.

As you may know, when the Bishop asked the Oratorians to come to York it was with the proviso that we should eventually take responsibility for two parishes, St Wilfrid's and St Joseph's. To begin with I had the assistance of Fr Nicholas Edmonds-Smith. This was always likely to be a temporary arrangement and so I was very grateful to Fr David Standen and to Fr Mark Drew, priests who were willing to come to York to provide assistance while an Oratorian Community of priests and brothers could be established.

Three years ago it would have been very difficult – if not impossible - to care for two parishes. I would like to express my gratitude to Fr David for all the excellent work he has done at St Joseph's and to Fr Mark for all his help. We will make plans soon to express our gratitude to Fr David for his ministry at St Joseph's in a suitable way.

By God's grace our Oratorian community has grown. We are now five at St Wilfrid's, myself, Fr Stephen Brown (formerly of the Leeds Diocese), Br Adam Fairbairn, Br Henry O'Connell and Br David Chadwick. God willing these last three will become priests in due course.

DOING MORE THINGS TOGETHER

We would like the St Joseph's and St Wilfrid's parishes to retain their distinct identities. But it does make sense in these circumstances to do more things together to cut down on workload both for priests and people. Some of this (e.g. Confirmation Preparation and Adult Formation through the RCIA) is being done already. Other things could certainly start being done together. I would like to propose a single website and the same weekly prayers of intercession for both parishes. This would promote co-operation between the two communities and would make sure that everyone knows what is going on in both churches. Preparation in common for First Holy Communion would also make sense, although it would certainly be good to continue to have a First Holy Communion Mass in each church.

The Bishop was very clear that in asking Oratorians to come to York he was expecting us to be faithful to our particular charism and to bring a distinctive contribution to the city. Some elements of this need to be taken into consideration in the present situation, since they will be a factor in the scheduling of Masses and services from week to week and across the Church's year.

*The Diocese of Middlesbrough Trust is a Registered Charity - 233748
The Oxford Oratory Trust is a Registered Charity - 1018455*

While we have often had responsibility for suburban parishes, Oratorians specialise in taking care of city-centre churches. We aim to keep them open and active all day and to provide not only regular and reliable Mass times, but frequent access to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, popular devotions and straightforward proclamation of the Catholic faith and spirituality - what our founder, St Philip Neri, called the "daily familiar discourse on the Word of God". At St Wilfrid's we now have daily Mass from Monday to Saturday at 12.10pm, with Exposition and Confessions for half an hour beforehand. Maintaining this, for the good of the whole city and out of fidelity to our own charism, will remain a priority.

Oratorians have a care for the solemn celebration of the Liturgy, drawing on the full riches of the musical tradition of the Catholic Church down the ages. This is particularly important at the most solemn seasons of the Church's year, especially for the services of the Easter Triduum and at Christmas. As priests living together in community we are in a position to celebrate these services with greater solemnity than most priests living alone are able to do. This brings a richer variety of liturgical styles to the city. It will be a priority not to lose that diversity.

Community life is the centre of our personal lives as priests and brothers of the Oratory. We are a family with all the joys and struggles that involves. We need to make sure that every day we are able to pray, eat and take our recreation together as a family. This is important for us, but it also means that we understand the pressures other families are under to make time for themselves and for their spiritual lives. We try to be a model of this for others and we are sure that other families in St Joseph's and St Wilfrid's will understand and sympathise if at times we have to prioritise our own domestic and spiritual well-being.

ONE NECESSARY IMMEDIATE CHANGE

Fr Stephen and Fr Richard each need to have one day off every week if we are not to burn out! From the beginning it will be necessary to cut some weekday Masses in each church. I propose cutting the 8am Mass on Monday morning at St Wilfrid's and the Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday morning Masses at St Joseph's. I know this looks rather hard on St Joseph's, but as I wrote above, the 12.10pm Mass at St Wilfrid's is not simply a Parish Mass but a service for the whole of York at the City Centre. The Mass at 10am on Saturday at St Margaret Clitherow's Shrine in the Shambles is likewise a service for the City and for the visitors from all over the world. There are always one or two people at that Mass each week from far afield.

A PROPOSED CHANGE

I would also like to propose a small change to the timing of the Saturday evening Vigil Mass in each parish so that should the need arise one priest will easily be able to celebrate both Masses. I would like to suggest that from the First Sunday of Advent (that is from Saturday, 26th November) the Saturday evening Mass at St Joseph's should be fifteen minutes earlier, at 5pm; and the Saturday evening Mass at St Wilfrid's should be fifteen minutes later, at 6.30pm.

This is probably quite enough to be going on with. There are certainly many questions people would like to ask and proposals they would like to make. Please feel free to write to me at the address above or to send me an email: rectory@stwilfridsyork.org.uk I will give consideration to everything suggested and do my best to put in place whatever is possible and best for the good of both parishes.

Finally I would like to thank Fr David for his generosity in coming to St Joseph's and the great work he has done here. It has made it possible for us to establish our Oratorian Community on a firm foundation. And I would like to thank the parishioners of St Joseph's and St Wilfrid's for their understanding of the demands involved and for their help in times past and for the warmth of the welcome we have received in both churches.

With an assurance of my daily prayers for St Joseph's and St Wilfrid's

Yours sincerely,



Fr Richard Duffield Cong.Orat.
Parish Priest