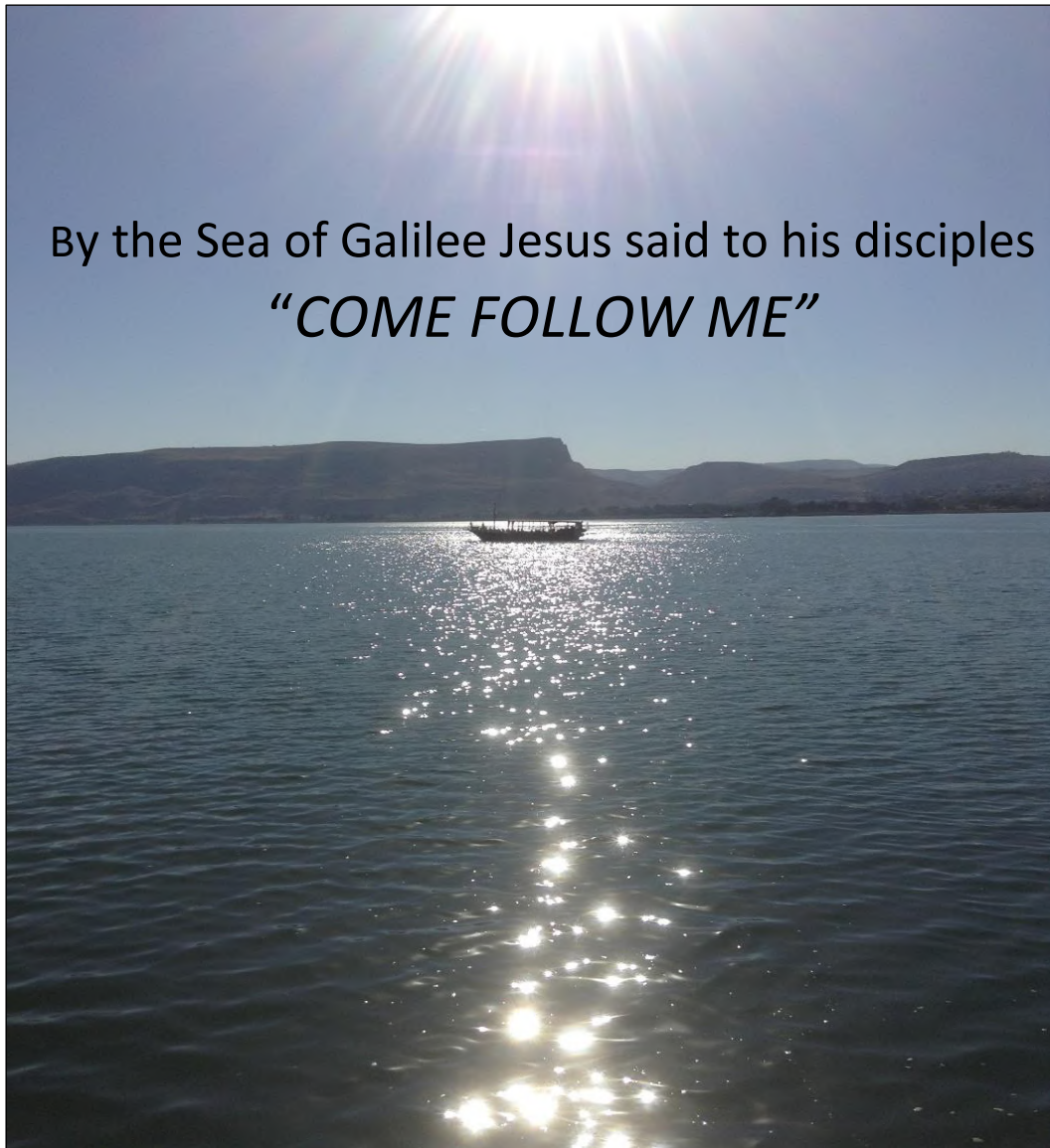


Diocese of Northampton



A Year of Prayer and Vocation

2018

Throughout the year we have been invited to pray the

Prayer of Richard of Chichester

*Thanks be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits which you have given us.*

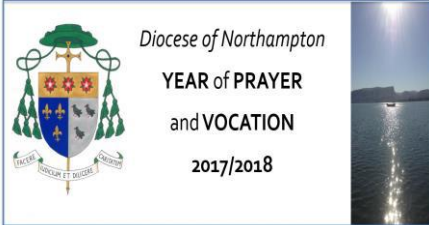
*For all the pains and insults
which you have borne for us.*

*Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,
may we know you more clearly,*

*love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly,*

day by day. Amen

“Let us make time this year to be still and open our hearts to God. It is a call first to holiness, to live our lives with integrity, in communion with God and one another. Then is God calling me to be single or married, focused on family, care of neighbours in need or the environment?”
Bishop Peter, 8 December 2017



*We began on the First Sunday in Advent
27 November 2017 - an invitation to take time for
Personal Prayer in December in spirit with many
others across our Diocese.*

During this year we are invited, as a diocese to renew our commitment to personal prayer. As we set out together let us ask God for the grace each day to hear and follow his call. In December our focus is on praying for all the people of our Diocese.



*Saints to accompany us
in December*
*Our Lady is the co-patron
of our diocese with **Thomas
Becket**. It was her hidden
life of prayer that graced
her with the strength to
say “yes” when the big
question was asked.*

*Richard of Chichester died
1253. He was a pastoral
reforming bishop and a
man of prayer.*

We are asked this month to regularly set aside a little time for personal prayer and listening to God's call in our everyday lives. It may lead to discerning a radical new way of life but it starts in small ways, and at any age. Find a regular time for personal prayer, in your home, on the commute, walking the dog.

To begin our prayer we need first to ask God for the grace we most need. It's only through grace and mercy we become people of prayer and not by our own efforts and strength.

Read the prayer of Richard of Chichester slowly many times. Highlight in your mind or with a pen the words or phrase that stand out for you. Each time you return they may be different words. Ponder on these words as Our Lady did on those addressed to her. After a while give thanks to God for the grace of this time of prayer, using the words of gratitude of Richard of Chichester or your own.

In January we pray for Christian Unity and celebrate our shared baptism.



Modern statue of St Francis in prayer on the Assisi hillside

The Saint to accompany us in January

Saint Francis of Assisi

Francis was born to a noble family in Assisi in Italy in about 1181. Through prayer and with God's grace, he renounced all possessions and clerical positions yet reformed the church through his life style. Through his love of nature he came to venerate the God of all creatures and all peoples.

Reflecting on our own baptism and calling we can seek to find God in others who, through their own baptism, worship and serve God in different ways.

From the Song of St Francis

*Most High, all powerful, good
Lord, yours are the praises, the
glory, the honour and all
blessings.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through all
creatures, especially through my
Brother Sun who brings the day,
and you give light through him.*

*Praise be You my Lord through
Sister Mother Earth, who sustains
us and governs us and who
produces varied fruits and
coloured flowers and herbs.
Give Him thanks and serve Him.*



This month we are asked to set aside a regular time for prayer, for listening to God's call in our everyday lives and for reflecting on the generosity of the grace of our baptism.

Find a regular time for personal prayer, in your home, on the commute, walking the dog. To begin our prayer we need first to ask God for the grace we most need. It's only through God's grace and mercy we become people of prayer and not by our own efforts and strength. Take time to relax in silence with nature, perhaps holding a natural object like a leaf or a shell and observing their wonder, or just gaze at the clouds out of the window. After a while thank God for this time. Consider any way God may be prompting you to respond by serving with other Christians in helping the needy and poor or protecting the environment.

In **February** we pray for those in Consecrated Life and all being called to join them.



Steps at Mount St Bernard Abbey

The saint to accompany us in February is

Blessed Cyprian Tansi

“If you are going to be a Christian at all, you might as well live entirely for God”.

Bl Cyprian Tansi

Blessed Cyprian Tansi was a Nigerian priest who felt God’s call to leave his homeland and enter the Cistercian Abbey of Mount St Bernard in Leicestershire. His main work here was to pray the psalms in community seven times a day. He died in 1964 and was beatified in 1998.

On the diocesan website there are links to some wonderful websites of contemplatives and to communities of apostolic religious. Most of these communities have Lay Associates, Third Orders, or Lay Oblates.

Psalm 117

***Praise the Lord all you nations,
acclaim him all you peoples.***

Strong is his love for us

he is faithful for ever.



Bl.Cyprian Tansi

We are asked this month to set aside time for personal prayer and to listen each day to God’s call. This could be done at home, on a regular commute or in a lunch break. Consider praying the psalms from *The Divine Office* sometimes called the *Liturgy of the Hours*. A small book entitled *A Shorter Morning and Evening Prayer* is available from Collins publications. The *Universalis* app. contains not only the *Hours* throughout the day but the daily readings for mass in a very accessible form on your tablet or smart phone. With his community Blessed Cyprian sang the psalms many times a day but their richness is not only for those in monastic life. Quietly and on our own we can join the wider Church reading in English the psalms for the day and know we pray them with many thousands of others.

In **March** we pray for the grace of repentance and the joy of forgiveness.



From the Our Father prayer

Forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who
trespass against us.

The saint to accompany us in March is

Saint Josephine Bakhita of Sudan

Born 1868, died 1947, canonised 2000.

Josephine was born to a warm and homely family in Darfur Sudan but was kidnapped by slavers as a young woman. As a slave she was sold many times until she was eventually shipped to Italy where she encountered Christianity and eventually became a religious sister. With great joy she forgave her captors and taught others both to accept and offer forgiveness.

“If I were to meet the slave-traders who kidnapped me and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands, for if that had not happened, I would not be a Christian and Religious today....The Lord has loved me so much: we must love everyone.....we must be compassionate.”

Josephine Bakhita

This month it is suggested that you use your imagination to help you pray.

Read several times through the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector's meeting with Jesus in the Gospel of Luke Ch 19 v1-10 or the story of the woman who anointed the feet of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke Ch 7 v36-50. Use your imagination to explore what it would be like to be either Zachaeus or the woman meeting Jesus. Relax and have the courage to be in his presence. What story of hurt and resentment might you share with Jesus? Ask him to help you with his healing grace. Listen to his words of mercy and love. Sit in silence filled with these words and then thank the Lord for this time.

Return to this gospel story many times going deeper within yourself so God can touch you in unexpected ways.



April is the month we celebrate in prayer the grace of our Baptism and the particular calling of those who are single.



Slipper Chapel at the Shrine of Our Lady in Walsingham.

St Vincent de Paul Society

An organisation run by groups of lay people who aim to tackle poverty and loneliness in all its forms through the provision of practical assistance. Join one in your parish or town.



Walsingham

The saint to accompany us in April is

Saint Frances of Rome 1384-1436

St Frances was married for forty years but her husband was away for much of the time in intercity wars and she became a single parent. She took responsibility for running the family estates. Additional tragedy came when two sons died of the plague. She opened her own house to the poor and sick and led other wealthy ladies of Rome in prayer and nursing the needy.

Two other inspiring single people who embraced the grace of their baptism were Charlotte Pearson Boyd 1837-1906 of Norfolk and the American Dorothy Day who founded the Catholic Workers Movement. Shortly after Charlotte Pearson Boyd became a Catholic she purchased the semi-ruined medieval Slipper Chapel at Walsingham which was being used as a barn and presented it to the Church where it became the centre of the National Shrine of Our Lady.

This month it is suggested we set aside time to pray at the beginning and end of the day. In the morning, my prayer might be for the gift of grace, so all I do in the course of a busy day will be for the service and glory of God. In the evening, I might review each section of the day to reflect on times God was noticeably present. This may not be only when things went smoothly but also in difficult times. I might also thank God for giving me this day and if there were times when grace was shunned now would be the time to acknowledge it and ask for God's mercy and forgiveness. Lastly, I might ask God for grace and help to meet whatever comes tomorrow. Maybe God will ask me to commit to more active service?



Crowds at Birmingham
New Street Station.

May is the month to pray for those being confirmed

**The saint to accompany us in May is
Blessed John Henry Newman.**

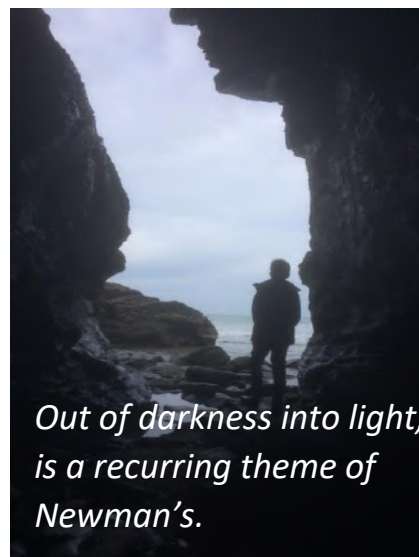
He was born in 1801, created cardinal in 1879, died in 1890, and beatified in 2010.

John Henry Newman was a priest, poet, theologian, and educator. He was an inspirational academic leader in Oxford. On becoming a Catholic at the age of 44 years he spent much time in pastoral work in Birmingham and establishing the Catholic University of Ireland in Dublin. All his life he struggled to be true to God's calling.

Prayer of Blessed John Henry Newman

God has created me to do him some definite service; he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission - I may never know it in this life but I will be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for nought, I shall do good: I shall do his work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place while not intending it, if I do but keep his commandments. Therefore, I will trust him. Whatever I am, I can never be thrown away.....He knows what he is about. Amen

This month it is suggested that we begin our time of personal prayer by asking for the grace to become more attentive to God's call. A helpful exercise might be to read the prayer above slowly many times selecting a word or phrase that stands out for you and which you could then continue to ponder on over the following days. You might then give thanks to God for always being present in your life even when the future seems unclear.



*Out of darkness into light,
is a recurring theme of
Newman's.*

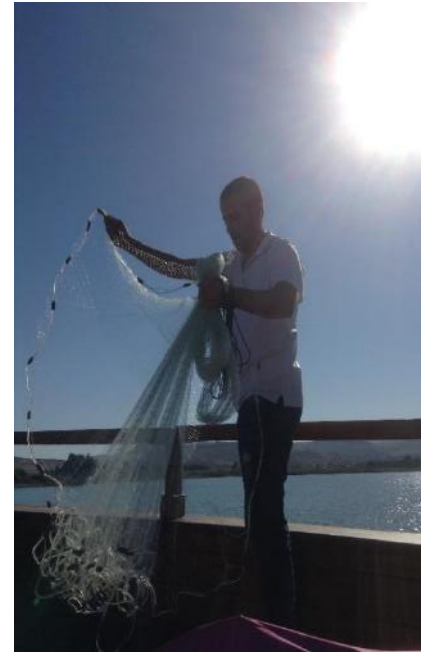
In **June** we pray for those called to the priesthood, diaconate and lay ministries.



**The saint to accompany us in June is
Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara of India**

He was born in 1805, died in 1871
and was canonised in in 2014

Saint Kuriakose was an Indian priest and social reformer. He was the co-founder of a congregation of priests, communities of religious sisters and training centres for catechists. There are now many thousands of his priests, sisters, and lay members living and working alongside their people. He was described as a priest with mud on his feet. Although a great theologian, educator, and man of devout prayer he valued action that grounded the gospel in the lives and families of those he served.



Saint Kuriakose recalls in his Ātmānutāpam:

You called me, out of your great kindness! Within me I am deeply convinced of it. How wonderful it is, O God, that You redeemed the lowliness of such a sinner as I am!



This month it is suggested that we begin our personal prayer time by asking for the grace to be more aware of God in our everyday life. It might be helpful to take time to sit on a park bench as people pass by or sit at the kitchen table and focus the eyes on a mobile phone (switched off) or coffee mug. Slowly breathe in and out and be aware of

of this breath reaching all parts of the body. Sit with the thought that God is as close as this breath. Try not to use this time to plan work or visualise beautiful sunsets. God is with us in the ordinary events of life, and it is here that each of us can offer worship and hear the call to serve.

In July we pray for the sick and housebound and their carers.



“What dignity
belongs to our
profession!

Christ in us serves
Christ in the other
person”

From the nursing
memoirs of Hanna
Chrzanowska

Saint John the Apostle,

Eileen O’Connor and Hanna Chrzanowska

The saint to accompany us in July is St John the Apostle and close friend of Jesus. He took Mary the mother of Jesus into his own home to care for her at the request of the dying Jesus.

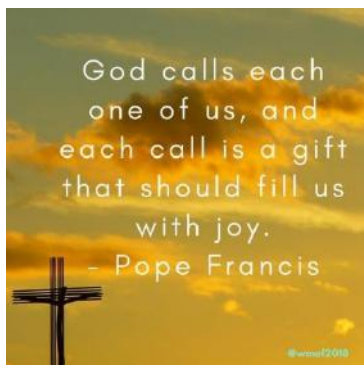
Other inspirational figures are the Australian Elly Rosaline (Eileen) O’Connor (1892-1921) and the Polish nurse Hanna Chrzanowska (1902-1971) whose causes for beatification have just begun. Eileen suffered a childhood accident and damaged her spine. She was in great pain all her life and often bedridden. Despite, or perhaps because of needing constant care herself she co-founded a congregation of nurses to serve the poor in and around Sydney.

Hanna, a lay person inspired generations of nurses through her service to the poor and her parish-based training programmes for nurses in Krakow.

This month it is suggested that we begin our prayer time by asking for the grace to see where God has blessed our life through the actions of others. It might be helpful to picture our life like a pathway, with many bends and corners, some sunny but others painful and dark. We could ask ourselves who was significant at each turn and why - and thank God for them. Can we hear God speak to us in these situations of mercy, love and compassion? If there were or still are difficult times in our personal story we might try without analysing the situation to quietly accept that God is always with us in suffering. We could finish our prayer time by looking at our present situation and how we might commit even in a small way to journeying side by side with others in God’s love and joy.



In August we pray for families.



Association of Interchurch Families

“You live in your marriages the hopes and difficulties of the path to Christian unity.”

Pope St Paul II,
York 1982

Saint Joseph

Saint Margaret Clitherow

Saints Louise & Zelig Martin,

Saint Therese of Lisieux

The saints to accompany us this month span a wide range of family life from Saint Joseph the step father who took on the responsibility for the child Jesus and as a result became for a time a refugee.

Saint Margaret Clitherow was the wife of a York butcher. At her trial for harbouring priests she refused to plead to save her family from being called as witnesses and incriminating themselves. This included protecting her husband who had always supported her actions but was not himself a Catholic. As a consequence, she was painfully crushed to death in 1586 rather than executed. Sts. Louise and Zelig were the loving parents of St Therese.

FAMILY PRAYER

God, our Father, we are brothers and sisters in Jesus your Son, one family, in the Spirit of your love. Bless us with the joy of love. Make us patient and kind, gentle and generous, welcoming to those in need. Help us to live your forgiveness and peace. Protect all families with your loving care, especially those for whom we now pray:pause....Increase our faith, strengthen our hope, keep us safe in your love, make us always grateful for the gift of life that we share. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen

This month it is suggested that we begin our prayer time by asking for the grace to see where God has blessed us through our families. We might give thanks for times of joy or ask for the gift of reconciliation and the courage to place painful times into the Lord's hands. The family prayer printed above could be repeated very slowly each day and words noted that are of personal significance.



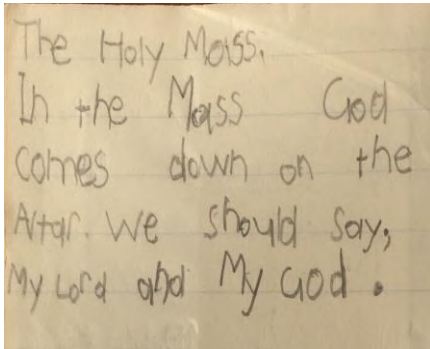
Icon of the Holy Family © World Meeting of Families 2018

In **September** we pray before the Blessed Sacrament.

Saint Thomas Aquinas

Saint Oscar Romero

The saints to accompany us this month span 800 years. Saint Thomas was an Italian Dominican friar, a renowned teacher, philosopher and preacher. He died in 1274. His hymns of adoration before the Eucharist are still sung today. Oscar Romero of El Salvador was martyred celebrating mass in his cathedral in 1980. He will be canonised in October 2018. He drew great strength from the mass which gave him the courage to be active in his opposition to the political and social oppression of his people.



From a child's old exercise book.

Prayer by Thomas Aquinas

Adoro te Devote

translated by Gerard Manley Hopkins

*Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore,
Masked by these bare shadows,
Shape and nothing more,
See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart
Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art.*

This month it is suggested we take time to sit quietly on our own before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle or join our parish at a Eucharistic devotion such as Benediction. You might just sit or kneel in silence and in your heart acknowledge with thanksgiving and adoration the great mystery and gift of the presence of God.



In **October** we pray for young people and their vocations.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola, born 1491 died 1556

Venerable Mary Ward, born 1585 died 1645

Saint Ignatius was a bright young man who loved the latest fashion and gossip at the court of Castile in Spain. He enjoyed drinking and socialising with the other knights until he was seriously injured in a battle. Whilst convalescing at his sister's he read the lives of the saints and found a fresh challenge in the service of our Lord. At first he had no clear idea of what the outcome of this calling would be or the Congregation of Jesuits he would later form. Gradually he found a deep peace in his heart by seeking to focus each day on orienting his desires and choices to the will of God. For Ignatius this went far beyond the duty of obedience to a total giving of himself to the service and glory of God and acceptance at all times of the love and grace of God.

The Ven. Mary Ward from Yorkshire never met Saint Ignatius but admired his spiritual life and writings. She felt strongly called to establish schools for girls where they could receive quality education. She met with very strong opposition from both the church and the state but persisted in listening to the desire within her to follow God's call.



Following the guidance of Saint Ignatius, my preparatory prayer will be to ask for the grace that all my thoughts, words and actions, what I have done and what I hope to do, may be directed to the greater service and glory of God.

We might pray at the beginning of the day and ask for God's grace to look at the day ahead. Then in a general way spend time offering it to God. We can ask for God's grace to have the attitude that all our actions and decisions will be oriented to giving glory and service to God. This is not the same as asking God to support our plans with a smooth running day but asking for the grace to live a life focused not on our own achievements but one that leads to greater communion with God in peace.



In **November** we pray for those who have died and those who have helped us live our baptismal vocation.

Beloved One, may you be blessed, because it is so: all is well. Julian of Norwich

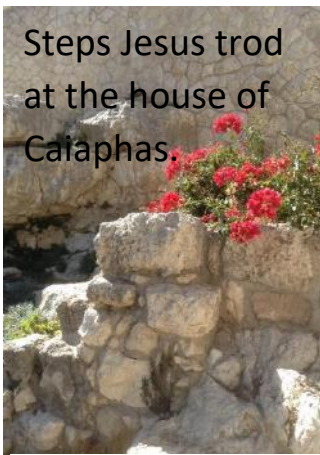
Dame Julian of Norwich 1342-1416

Little is known about Julian, even her name may be the one she took from St Julian's Church where she lived as an anchoress. Her writings are thought to be the first by a woman in English. These works on the revelation of God's love for her and all creation were lost until the early 20th century and, as a consequence, Julian has never formally been canonised a saint.

Julian was probably a laywoman who witnessed the plague-ravaged streets of Norwich when half the population died. High taxes to pay for the war in France, a shortage of workers and no freedom of labour for serfs led to social unrest and rocketing prices of staple goods resulting in the Peasants Revolt. Hundreds of Norfolk men from all levels of society and the Church converged on Norwich in its Summer of Blood of 1381.

Julian came close to death in about 1372 and as she lay dying she had visions of the tender love and mercy of God. For the next three decades she pondered on these "showings" and finally wrote about them. Although an anchoress living alone in a cell, Julian spent many hours giving counsel through an open window to those who passed in the busy town.

Steps Jesus trod
at the house of
Caiaphas.



It is suggested that we take time this month to sit quietly and ponder the great and small events of our lives that have helped shape us into the people we are today. We could remember our deceased relatives, friends and all who have guided us. Because we all, both living and dead, are a part of the mystical Body of Christ we can pray with and for those who have died. We can give thanks for the blessings that they were for

us when alive and ask for God's tender love and mercy to forgive their failings and embrace them in everlasting compassion and love. We can ask for the grace to live more fully each day our baptismal vocation.

As the year closes in **December** we are asked to continue each day our commitment to prayer and to embracing our baptismal call.



Medieval wall painting of the Annunciation at Bradwell Abbey in Milton Keynes.
Our Lady is the co-patron of our diocese with Thomas Becket.

Looking to the future for our Diocese.

Our Diocese looks very different from when it was created in 1976 and the medieval pilgrims to Bradwell Abbey would not recognise its landscape. Each age comes with its own political and domestic problems. While there never was a golden age to live in and we cannot predict the future we can profit from knowledge of our own family and cultural heritage and learn from the lives of those who once lived in our diocese. Through our baptism we are all called in prayer and service for the glory of God.

The Bishops of England will rededicate England as the Dowry of Mary in 2020 and the statue of our Lady of Walsingham will visit our cathedral 7-9 February 2019. Milton Keynes is the biggest and probably most modern conurbation in our diocese. Maybe it will see pilgrims from many heritages visit Bradwell Abbey to seek the patronage of Mary the Mother of All People in a new and innovative way.



The word on the left was written by Ka-Yee Chan an active member of our diocese from St Augustine's parish in Milton Keynes. She is artist in residence at Westbury Arts Centre where she teaches calligraphy. In her own words she explains. *This word is "nothingness/emptiness" this word is a great prayer for contemplation. Imagine you see a bowl, is it really empty? It is the emptiness in the bowl that can serve*

its purpose as a bowl to contain food or drink for nurturing our body.

Likewise, we may see the bowl is empty of things we are expecting, however it is full of air, or smell of the food it contains....and so on.

May the Lord fill our diocese in unexpected ways.

OUR MISSION IN CHRIST

A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness, for “this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1Thess 4:3). Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel. That mission has its fullest meaning in Christ and can only be understood through him.

The Father’s plan is Christ, and ourselves in him. In the end, it is Christ who loves in us, for “holiness is nothing other than Charity lived to the full.” (Pope Benedict XVI). Let your lives be transformed.

From Pope Francis’ *Gaudete et Exsultate*:

The Call to Holiness in Today’s World



Baptismal font at Wadowice home of St. Pope John Paul II

When Saint Pope John Paul II was asked what was the most important day of his life he was expected to answer either his ordination day to the priesthood or his election day as pope. Instead he answered his baptismal day. We share this baptism into the death and resurrected life of Christ here in our community of Northampton Diocese.

It was Bishop Peter Doyle’s vision that led to the Diocesan Year of Prayer and Vocation. The initiative for monthly personal prayer sheets came from Mgr Kevin McGinnell. They were composed on behalf of the Diocesan Spirituality Network with the help of many friends by Marie Heath spirituality@nores.org.uk

There are some exciting programmes of formation planned.

Contact Avril Baigent, Pastoral Ministry Advisor re. the Lay Formation Fund