



THE ARCHDIOCESE  
*of* BIRMINGHAM

**Year for Priests**

**2018 - 2019**

**A Prayer for Priests**



The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is set aside by the Church as a day of prayer and intercession for the sanctification of priests. In 2018, in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, it marks the start of a year of thanksgiving, prayer and celebration for the priests of this diocese, in preparation for a national celebration of priesthood to coincide with the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart in 2019.

This year marks the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the English College, Douai, the first institution to form priests for the mission in England after the Reformation. From Douai, colleges were founded across France, Spain and Portugal, and in Rome. These colleges trained the priests, without whom Catholicism would almost certainly have died out in England and Wales.

For generations, priests were treated as traitors and lived under cover in fear of their lives; hundreds were martyred for their witness to Christ and His Church. Even in later times, priests were few in number, poorly resourced and socially excluded. Without their resilience and courage, the Church we have today would not exist.

This year is a time to thank God for the priests of today, as well as to celebrate the past. Lay people, deacons and members of religious congregations are encouraged to pray for the priests of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, past, present and to come. We celebrate and give thanks for those who have gone before us, and for our present generations of priests, and support them with our prayers. We pray ever more fervently that young men in our families, parishes, schools, colleges and universities will hear and respond to the call to priesthood.

This prayer has been composed to draw together our intentions for this special year. You are warmly invited to pray it frequently, whether privately, in families or groups, at home or in church.

### **A Prayer for Priests**

God our Father, we praise you for the gift of the priesthood in your Church, and for the ministry of priests in service of your people. We thank you for the precious gift of your Son, received at the hands of your priests.

We pray for all the priests of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. May they find inspiration and encouragement from the laity, deacons and religious, and from each other.

We recall, with gratitude, the priests who have been a source of grace in our lives. [We pray especially for Fr...] Be watchful over your priests, Lord, we pray. Give courage to those who serve you, and grant them their eternal reward. Have mercy on those who have struggled to stay close to you.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, we place all priests of the Archdiocese of Birmingham under your protection. Be present in the hearts of all our priests. May their hearts burn with love for you. We pray that all priests experience the joy of the Gospel in their lives, and are constantly enriched by your Word.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, renew all priests in their service of God.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, guide all priests along the right path.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, grant all priests patience and fortitude.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, teach us compassion and understanding for our priests.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, open our hearts to respond to our own call to your service.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, nurture vocations to the priesthood in our families, parishes and schools.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, bless the priests and people of our parishes, and fill our hearts with your mercy. Amen

