



The Tower

Saint Barbara the Great Martyr Orthodox Church
<https://www.stbarbara.org.uk/>

Sunday 8th February 2026
Sunday of the Prodigal Son



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We started the second month of 2026. The main feast during the first week of February was the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple on 02/02/2026. It was very good to see that many people came on Sunday, and our numbers have stayed steady since last week. We have around 80 people for the service of the Divine Liturgy. This is an excellent number for our small community, and I hope and pray that this continues throughout the whole year.

I would also mention our very well-behaved children. It is very nice to see them all approaching Holy Communion. They are very well taught, and they all show great respect for the Eucharist.

On the 3rd of February, I was invited as a guest of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Werburgh in Chester for their parish feast. It is also worth saying that the Orthodox Church commemorates our local saint on the same date. This saint is somewhat hidden between the great feast of the Presentation and the feasts of St. Simeon the God-Receiver and Prophetess Anna.

There I met very interesting people who would like to visit our church, and next to me on the bench was the Lord Mayor of Chester. I had a very nice conversation with her, and she was very interested to know about our community and our work. At the end she said to me with a smile, "Fr. John, do you know that you can invite me sometime to your services?" and we exchanged our details. It was definitely very profitable visit to the Roman Catholic Church.

On the 25th of January we had an amazing time until late at the church refectory. Glesni- Magdalene and Luke are now Married. May God bless them with good family and plenty of children. Few picture from this beautiful moment in this newspaper.

Fr. John



Announcements

- There is still time to register your child for the summer camps. Please visit the website to learn more. The application form can be found at <https://thyateirayouthcamps.org.uk/camp-saint-bega/>
- On Sundays many people come to church by car and park in the cemetery. Please avoid parking in the middle section around the Cenotaph, and always leave enough space for another car to pass.
- Fr. Pancratios and Anna have donated several beautiful pieces of velvet fabric to the church. A lovely little curtain will be made for the Holy Door. Thank you for this generous gift, which will help make our worship space even more beautiful.
- We are working on replacing the worn carpet in the church. Floor samples are available to view. I am currently seeking quotes for the work. If you would like to make a donation toward this project, please speak to me or Theodoros. This is an expensive project, and any help is appreciated.

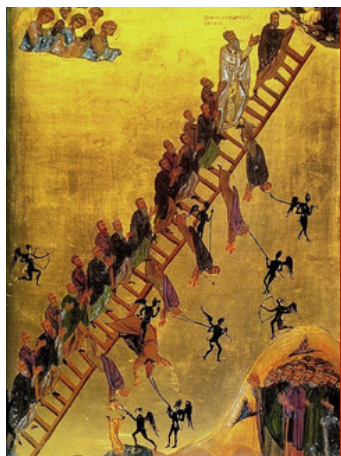
Upcoming Services

8 February Sun	10.00am 11.00am	Matins Divine Liturgy	Sunday of the Prodigal Son
9 February Mon	5.30pm	Vigil	Hieromartyr Haralambos
11 February Wed	6.30pm 7.15pm	Vespers Catechesis	St. Meletius Archbishop of Antioch
14 February Sat	4.30pm 5.30pm	Panachida Great Vespers	Saturday of the Souls
15 February Sun	10.00am 11.00am	Matins Divine Liturgy	Judgment Sunday Meatfare Sunday
18 February Wed	6.30pm 7.15pm	Vespers Catechesis	Ap. from the 70 Archippus and Philemon
21 February Sat	5.30pm	Great Vespers	Uncovering the Relics at Evgenius
22 February Sun	10.00am 11.00am	Matins Divine Liturgy Vespers	Forgiveness Sunday The beginning of the Great Lent



Great Lent

Begins 22nd February 2026



Great Lent 2026 starts on the 22nd of February with the Forgiveness Prayer held right after the Divine Liturgy. As Orthodox Christians, we keep this fast by first asking forgiveness from one another and from our relatives. Please come to this service and enter Great Lent with a prepared heart. Those who are exempt from fasting are children, the sick, pregnant and nursing women, and the elderly who need a special diet. The rest of us are encouraged to make the effort to complete the fast.

The following week, on the 1st of March 2026, we celebrate the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Don't forget to bring an icon from home. We will have a small procession around the church with the icons and offer short prayers on the four sides of the church.



A story from Shrewsbury Orthodox Church



Saint Werburgh, who's memory is celebrated on the 3rd of February, was a princess of Mercia, who exchanged her coronet for a veil early in life and became a great foundress and leader of monastic communities in East Anglia and Mercia. Her greatness in life is reflected in her veneration in death. Her holy body, jealously guarded by her monastic community in Trictingham, was given up through a miracle when the locks fell away and she was borne by monks to Hanbury, her desired resting place. But it was Aethelflaed – Lady of the Mercians – who most likely delivered her relics to Chester – the city of her patronage – and established her veneration in Shrewsbury. In Chester she delivered the city from fire and perils inflicted by barbarian invaders.

Saint Werburgh, for centuries venerated as the patroness of Chester, was not born there, neither did she live, die or was buried there. Werburgh was the daughter of King Wulfhere the first Christian king of Mercia (657–75) and his wife Eormenhild, and through her mother was related to both the Kentish and East Anglian royal families. She early showed an aptitude towards the religious life and entered the monastery of Ely where her great aunt Aethelthryth was abbess. As the “Te Deum” was chanted Werburgh entered the cloister with Aethelthryth. Werburgh was stripped of her costly apparel, she exchanged her coronet for a veil, and in a rough habit began her new life.

Werburgh remained for some time at Ely. She succeeded her grandmother Seaxburh and her mother Eormenhild as abbess of the double monastery, but was recalled to Mercia by her uncle, King Aethelred, Wulfhere's brother and successor (675–704), and given authority over the nunneries of his kingdom. St. Werburgh's work was deeply rooted in prayer and discipline, taking but one meal daily and that only of the coarsest food following the example of the desert fathers she recited the whole of the Psalter daily upon her knees. She performed miracles while living on her father's estate at Weedon (Northants) and died about 700 in her monastery of Trictingham.

few years later she was buried in accordance with her wishes in the monastery of Hanbury, near Repton (Staffs.). Nine years later, in recognition of her sanctity, her remains were raised at the command of her cousin, the

Mercian king Ceolred (709–16), and were found to be incorrupt. Her relics remained enshrined at Hanbury until the time of the Danish invasions, shortly after which they were removed to Chester where they remained until the destruction of her shrine in the 1530s.



William of Malmesbury in the 12th century provides us with contemporary witness of miracles wrought at the shrine. Evidently it was a portable shrine because it was carried about in processions, and in times of danger

and emergency it was “set on the towne walles” to save Chester from the attacks of the Welsh; and again, “The devout Chanons sette the holy Shryne against their enemies at the sayd Northgate when innumerable barbarike nations pupost to destroye and spoyle the cite.” Henry Bradshaw tells us “howe in 1180 a great fire, like to destroye all Chestre, by miracle ceased when the holy shrine was borne about the town by the monkes.” He goes on to tell how the fire quickly consumed a great part of the town including the minster of Saint Michael at the Roman south gate but the monks came from the abbey bearing the shrine of Saint Werburgh and chanting litanies. The blaze was thus extinguished.

The magnificent shrine built in medieval times was destroyed at the Reformation when parts of it were recycled into an elaborate Bishop's throne. In 1876 its scattered portions were re-assembled by one of the cathedral's restorers, Sir A. W. Blomfield. Today the reconstructed shrine stands in the Lady Chapel where it remains a place of pilgrimage.

Source: Shrewsbury Orthodox Church

Scan the QR code to read the full account of St Werburgh's life.



The icon on the front of this page is a beautiful work written by iconographer Aidan Hart, a parishioner and Chairman of the Orthodox church in Shrewsbury. You can see this icon on the wall above the altar in Shrewsbury. We also have a small icon of the saint in the altar, made from a printed copy. Her feast often falls in the shadow of the great feasts of St. Symeon and Anna the Prophetess, on the same date, the 3rd of February, and the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. Full hymnography for the saint is available in English, and it would be wonderful to organise something in the coming years to honour this great saint.

The following readings and sermon have been extracted from the Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain news bulletin.

To access the full bulleting, please visit: www.thyateira.org.uk.

ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Α΄ Κορ. στ΄, 12-20

Ἀδελφοί, πάντα μοι ἐξεστίν, ἀλλ' οὐ πάντα συμφέρει· πάντα μοι ἐξεστίν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγὼ ἐξουσιασθήσομαι ὑπὸ τινος. Τὰ βρώματα τῆ κοιλία, καὶ ἡ κοιλία τοῖς βρώμασιν· ὁ δὲ Θεὸς καὶ ταύτην καὶ ταῦτα καταργήσει. Τὸ δὲ σῶμα οὐ τῆ πορνείᾳ, ἀλλὰ τῷ Κυρίῳ, καὶ ὁ Κύριος τῷ σώματι· ὁ δὲ Θεὸς καὶ τὸν Κύριον ἡγειρεν καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐξεγερεῖ διὰ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ. Οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν μέλη Χριστοῦ ἐστίν; Ἄρας οὖν τὰ μέλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποιήσω πόρνῆς μέλη; Μὴ γένοιτο. Οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ὁ κολλῶμενος τῇ πόρνῃ ἐν σῶμά ἐστιν; Ἔσονται γάρ, φησίν, οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν. Ὁ δὲ κολλῶμενος τῷ Κυρίῳ ἐν πνευμᾷ ἐστιν. Φεύ· γετε τὴν πορνείαν. Πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὃ ἐάν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτός τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν· ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἁμαρτάνει. Ἡ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἐστίν, οὗ ἔχετε ἀπὸ Θεοῦ; Καὶ οὐκ ἐστὲ ἑαυτῶν, ἠγοράσθητε γὰρ τιμῆς· δοξάσατε δὴ τὸν Θεὸν ἐν τῷ σώματι ὑμῶν, καὶ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ὑμῶν, ἅτινά ἐστιν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

EPISTLE READING

1 Cor. 6: 12-20

Brethren, all things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything. Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?

Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, The two shall become one flesh. But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality.

Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body and in your spirit which belong to God.

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Λουκ. ιε΄, 11-32

Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην· Ἄνθρωπός τις εἶχε δύο υἱούς. καὶ εἶπεν ὁ νεώτερος αὐτῶν τῷ πατρί· Πάτερ, δός μοι τὸ ἐπιβάλλον μέρος τῆς οὐσίας. καὶ διεῖλεν αὐτοῖς τὸν βίον. καὶ μετ' οὐ πολλὰς ἡμέρας συναγαγὼν ἅπαντα ὁ νεώτερος υἱὸς ἀπεδήμησεν εἰς χώραν μακράν, καὶ ἐκεῖ διεσκόρπισε τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ ζῶν ἀσώτως.

GOSPEL READING

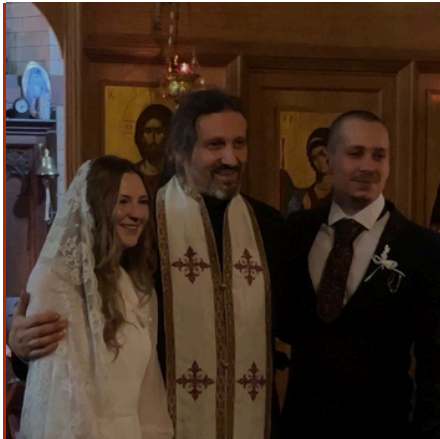
Luke 15: 11-32

The Lord said this parable: There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them.

Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living.

δαπανήσαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ πάντα ἐγένετο λιμὸς ἰσχυρὸς κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἐκείνην, καὶ αὐτὸς ἤρξατο ὑπερεῖσθαι. καὶ πορευθεὶς ἐκολλήθη ἐνὶ τῶν πολιτῶν τῆς χώρας ἐκείνης, καὶ ἐπεμψεν αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς ἀγρούς αὐτοῦ βόσκειν χοίρους. καὶ ἐπεθύμει γεμίσει τὴν κοιλίαν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν κερατίων ὧν ἤσθιον οἱ χοῖροι, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδίδου αὐτῷ. εἰς ἑαυτὸν δὲ ἐλθὼν εἶπε· πόσοι μίσθιοι τοῦ πατρὸς μου περισσεύουσιν ἄρτων, ἐγὼ δὲ λιμῷ ἀπόλλυμαι! ἀναστὰς πορεύσομαι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ ἐρῶ αὐτῷ· πατέρ, ἡμάρτον εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ἐνώπιόν σου. οὐκέτι εἰμι ἄξιος κληθῆναι υἱὸς σου· ποιήσόν με ὡς ἓνα τῶν μισθίων σου. καὶ ἀναστὰς ἦλθε πρὸς τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ. ἔτι δὲ αὐτοῦ μακρὰν ἀπέχοντος εἶδεν αὐτὸν ὁ πατήρ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐσπλαγχνίσθη, καὶ δραμῶν ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν. εἶπε δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ υἱός· πατέρ, ἡμάρτον εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ἐνώπιόν σου, καὶ οὐκέτι εἰμι ἄξιος κληθῆναι υἱὸς σου. εἶπε δὲ ὁ πατήρ πρὸς τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ· ἐξενέγκατε τὴν στολὴν τὴν πρώτην καὶ ἐνδύσατε αὐτόν, καὶ δότε δακτύλιον εἰς τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ καὶ ὑποδήματα εἰς τοὺς πόδας, καὶ ἐνέγκαντες τὸν μόσχον τὸν σιτευτὸν θύσατε, καὶ φαγόντες εὐφρανθῶμεν, ὅτι οὗτος ὁ υἱὸς μου νεκρὸς ἦν καὶ ἀνέζησε, καὶ ἀπολωλὼς ἦν καὶ εὐρέθη. καὶ ἤρξαντο εὐφραίνεσθαι. Ἦν δὲ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐν ἀγρῷ· καὶ ὡς ἐρχόμενος ἤγγισε τῆ οἰκίᾳ, ἤκουσε συμφωνίας καὶ χορῶν, καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος ἓνα τῶν παιδῶν ἐπυνθάνετο τί εἶη ταῦτα. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὅτι ὁ ἀδελφός σου ἦκει καὶ ἔθυσεν ὁ πατήρ σου τὸν μόσχον τὸν σιτευτόν, ὅτι ὑγιαίνοντα αὐτὸν ἀπέλαβεν. ὠργίσθη δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν εἰσελθεῖν. ὁ οὖν πατήρ αὐτοῦ ἐξελθὼν παρεκάλει αὐτόν. ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπε τῷ πατρί· ἰδοὺ τοσαῦτα ἔτη δουλεύω σοι καὶ οὐδέποτε ἐντολὴν σου παρήλαθον, καὶ ἐμοὶ οὐδέποτε ἔδωκας ἔριφον ἓνα μετὰ τῶν φίλων μου εὐφρανθῶ· ὅτε δὲ ὁ υἱὸς σου οὗτος, ὁ καταφαγὼν σου τὸν βίον μετὰ πορνῶν, ἦλθεν, ἔθυσας αὐτῷ τὸν μόσχον τὸν σιτευτόν. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· τέκνον, σὺ πάντοτε μετ' ἐμοῦ εἶ, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐμὰ σὰ ἐστίν· εὐφρανθήναι δὲ καὶ χαρῆναι ἔδει, ὅτι ὁ ἀδελφός σου οὗτος νεκρὸς ἦν καὶ ἀνέζησε, καὶ ἀπολωλὼς ἦν καὶ εὐρέθη.

And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his belly with the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry. Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'



For me it was a great pleasure and honour to conduct the marriage of these two young people. Why do I speak so much about this wedding? In our community, this is a rare event, especially among young people. This Wedding is a wonderful example for many in our church. I was extremely happy to be there. We baptised Glesni and Luke, and we Married them in our community. It would be amazing if, in the near future, we also Baptise their children. What makes me even happier is that this is the second young couple received and married in our community in the past year. Stephen and Kateryna were married a few months ago, and they were the witnesses and sponsors of this Wedding. This is a small but very positive sign for our church. If we continue at this pace, in another twenty years we may have a church full of people baptised and married in St. Barbara... and plenty of children. Glory to God!

SERMON ON THE GOSPEL READING

In this Gospel parable the younger son is dissatisfied with being his father's son; he wants to be his own man. He is not content to wait to share in the abundance of his father. Instead he chooses to grab -now- a lesser portion. Having got it, he leaves for a far country, to spend on excess what he has not earned.

When we are pulled away by sin, we too may hide in a place far from our Father's house. We avoid the priest, neither going to church nor speaking about our faith. The world lures us to spend not just money but ourselves: to consume what does not nourish and possess what costs but has no eternal value. Drawn away by promises of "autonomy" and "freedom" from accountability we seek our "truest self" apart from our Creator.

Now it happens that a famine comes upon the land and the son begins to want. Hungry, and "friends" gone, he resorts to a job feeding pigs, but even the feed of the pigs is denied him. We see that, though God sustains all things, if we set ourselves to reject his sustenance we will find ourselves starving.

As the younger son's life away from his father, ours apart from God becomes a netherworld: hollowed out, without reason, full of distraction but devoid of meaning.

Finally, in this moment of desperation, he comes to his senses. Coming to himself and in desperate repentance he thinks he has it worked out [has a brainwave?]: he will ask his father to make him his servant, because for he cannot imagine what is about to transpire.

As St Paul reminds us: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

The son is still afar when the father spots him and runs headlong to embrace and kiss him. Despite the lingering smell of the pigs? So too God comes to in Jesus' arms open wide upon the cross. With a ring on his finger and in the best robes he eats fatted calf at a banquet in his honour, sonship restored.

The father lovingly allows his son his prepared speech, but the boy's restoration is unearned and entirely a gift of the Father. This son, once lost, can do nothing but participate in his Father's restoration of him.

As for us, our restoration banquet is right here before the altar - no less than His own body and blood. We, rightly, strive and repent but our salvation is poured out freely upon us by our heavenly Father. The lost and dead one is found and made alive again.

Here there is no angry, offended God; only, in response to repentance, a love and acceptance that we cannot comprehend. But there were two sons and we are both of them. We do, however, readily understand the elder brother. Being ignorant of his assured status as a son of his Father, he has not fully appreciated his position: so his Father spells it out: 'you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.'. He has resented his brother's restoration and the abandoned largesse his father has expended on him. We too must be vigilant that we do not become resentful of those lost children newly coming to Orthodoxy, seeking relationship with, and life within the house of their Heavenly Father. Just as none of us are immune to the temptation that beset the youngest son, perhaps more so we may resent his restoration as, like the elder, we have been taking for granted what we already lavishly possess in the Kingdom of our Father.

Presbyter Stephen Edwards

Beautiful picture from the marriage of Glesni and Luke. The church service was amazing, and it warmed my heart to see many people from our community there for the celebration. When the service ended, everyone started chatting and asking me questions about our Orthodox traditions in the Sacrament of Marriage... and the happy faces of the bridegroom and bride said everything. We then had a party and stayed in the church until late.



Christian Orthodox Thyateira Youth (COTY)

COTY is the official youth ministry of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, for ages 16-35.

To learn more visit: www.coty.org.uk.

Instagram: [COTY_org](https://www.instagram.com/COTY_org)



Synaxarion St. Haralambos Bishop Of Magnesia



The Holy Hieromartyr Haralambos lived during the reign of Emperor Septimus Severus (194-211), when Lucian was the governor, and he was a Priest of the Christians of the city of Magnesia. Having taught the way of truth, and preached the faith of Christ, he was condemned by the above named tyrant, stripped of his priestly vestments, and the skin of his entire body was scraped. When the governor Lucian saw him bravely enduring these torments, he became enraged, and endeavored to rip the Saint apart with his own hands, but immediately his hands were severed, and were clung to the body of the Martyr. However the Saint prayed for him, and his health was restored. When the executioners Porphyrios and Bapτος saw this miracle, they renounced the idols and believed in Christ.

Three women who stood nearby and saw this, also came to believe. The governor captured all of them, and tormented them with various torments, then he mercilessly had them beheaded. For although the Saint made him well and healed him physically, the soul of the wretch remained unhealed.



Please consider donating!

Our parish is a self-supporting charitable community, relying solely on the generosity of our faithful, with no supplementary funding from external bodies. We rely on your donations for everything you see in the church including small salary for the priest, and don't forget all charitable work of the church and all the fundraisings organised from the Archdiocese. Remember that all our finances are in your hands. You are the owners of everything in the church including of the building and all the bills.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please complete the Gift Aid Form alongside each donation as this allows the church to receive an additional 25p for every £1 you donate, at no extra cost to you. Please use yellow envelopes located at the entrance of the church. If you use card payment for your donations, and you like to Gift Aid your payment, please put your receipt in the yellow envelope and sing it.

Thank you for your support !



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