

PARISH PROFILE

PARISH OF THE SACRED HEART, NORTH GOSFORTH

An Overview

The church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Sacred Heart) was formally opened and dedicated on 24th June 1912. The church itself was built in the mid 1860s and for the next forty years or so was part of Gosforth Park, then a country estate on the northern most edge of the rapidly expanding city of Newcastle. It was built privately by the estate owners, the Smiths, who retained it when the rest of the property was sold to form Gosforth Park race course in the 1880s.

The church was originally a private chapel known as St Mary's and from 1865 to 1911 it had a number of Anglican incumbents paid for by the estate owners, although it was never dedicated as an Anglican Church. By the early 20th century it had fallen into disuse and it was bought in 1910 by Bishop Collins, (for £3000) with his own money, to meet the needs of the Catholic population of Wideopen, Hazlerigg, Brunswick, Dinnington, North Gosforth and Seaton Burn, all mining village communities.

For the first 14 years the church was served from St Aidan's in Benton and, from 1925, from St Charles' in Gosforth. Eventually, with the expansion of urban Newcastle into estates in the south of the parish, and the consequent increase in population, the parish was given its own priest. Since September 2020 the Sacred Heart has shared a Parish priest with St. Charles. In addition, we are lucky to have the support of Rev. John Hawthorne, one of our parishioners who has been ordained as a Permanent Deacon.

A church hall was built in 1999. In the second half of the 20th Century the demographic make-up of the parish began to change with the decline of mining and with the growth of residential estates between the old villages. With the development of The Great Park, the parish is still growing. This has attracted a mixed demographic of young families, single people and older, retired people.

There are several other Christian communities within the parish boundaries and relations with them are excellent at all levels. During Lent each community hosts an ecumenical lunch where the common aspects of our Christian beliefs are celebrated.

Sacred Heart Primary School was opened in 1973 and was closed in 1995. The Sacred Heart is now served by St Oswald's Catholic Primary School. The parish works closely with the primary school across a range of activities and event.

Parish Structures

The parish is part of the Jesmond St. Mary Partnership. Representatives from the Parish Council and the Finance Committee attend meetings of this group. Much of the work of the parish is co-ordinated by these two groups who have an overview of all activities. The parish's Finance Committee oversees expenditure and ensures that administrative matters run smoothly. The Parish's Safeguarding Representative plays a key role in ensuring that all safeguarding issues are dealt with sensitively and speedily.

Liturgy and sacramental life

The centre-point of our parish liturgy is the celebration of Mass - a vigil mass on Saturday evening, and Mass on Sunday morning. Weekday Mass is celebrated in the parish twice during the week. Our Eucharistic celebration is vibrant and well attended. Participation by the whole community is encouraged and we have thriving teams of readers, musicians, servers, those who compose the Prayer of the Faithful, Eucharistic Ministers, sacristans and flower arrangers.

First Communion and Confirmation preparation are undertaken by teams of trained catechists who aim to involve families as much as possible. There are also programmes to help people to prepare for the sacraments of baptism and matrimony.

The parish also hosts a range of spiritual activities and opportunities for reflection throughout the year.

Witness and service in the community

Liturgy without witness would be incomplete and our liturgy spills out into a wide range of activities in the parish, and far beyond. Taking the Word of God to others inspires us to be involved with other local churches, and Sacred Heart parish is involved in a range of ecumenical activities. As a parish we also support food banks run by the Diocesan Refugee Service and by organisations in Hazlerigg and Brunswick. At Christmas there is a major drive to collect toys and clothing for those who are struggling. These are distributed through a network of refuges and social workers, many of whom have worked with parish on a very long standing basis.

The SVP group actively supports those in need in the parish throughout the year. Twice a year there is a special Mass for the sick followed by a fish and chip lunch.

Our parish hall supports a wide number of groups enjoying a variety of social activities. From coffee and biscuits after mass every Sunday morning, when we get the opportunity to chat and welcome newcomers, to our Toddler Group during the week and to our dancing and exercise groups there's something for everybody.

POSH (Players of the Sacred Heart) has been going strong for around 30 years, with their annual pantomime giving pleasure to the participants, (all ages, all abilities, all welcome) and its audiences.

But more important than the content of our social activities is the ethos behind them: we are a family and we should care for and support each other. We hope that in our church and hall we provide a place where we can live out this vocation.