

**Collation, Induction and Installation  
of  
Rev. Tom Gillum  
Vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Nottingham  
Sunday 18 March 2018, 4pm**

Hosea 11.1-9 and Luke 2.41-end

Jesus said to his parents, *'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'*

I wonder, 'How many anxious parents have searched frantically for their children in this city over the centuries. It's a common experience and most of the time the child is found in a matter of minutes.

In Luke's Gospel we get an insight into the care Joseph and Mary had towards the child who had been gifted to them in unique circumstances: the one who would in some mysterious way become the Saviour of the world. They didn't need to produce a career plan for Jesus; they didn't need to become the ultimate pushy parents and get him in to the finest Rabbinic School; they didn't need to keep reminding him who he was. They simply took care of him.

They provided a loving and secure home in which he could be nurtured in faith and grow in stature, that is in character. They could leave the rest to God, and so Luke adds "he was filled with wisdom (that is deep wisdom-for-life not an indication of his likely GCSE's grades) and the grace of God was on him."

And the point I want to make on the Eve of the Feast of St Joseph is this: that we can share the ministry of Joseph and Mary as we provide the care, love and security that will enable many future followers after Christ to be nurtured in the faith and grow in wisdom.

This is my prayer for St Mary's as you enter a new chapter in the story of this remarkable church and its role in an ever-changing city:

I pray that St Mary's will be a place where over the coming decade many hundreds of children, youth and students (alongside people of all ages) get lost in the heart of the city. Not separated from anxious parents but as Charles Wesley put it 'lost in wonder, love and praise'. This will be a place where future generations meet with and encounter our Father in heaven: where the despairing find hope, the guilty find forgiveness, and the lonely find friendship with God.

As many of you know, St Mary's has a good history engaging in the care, education and spiritual well-being of children and young people.

Back in 1512 it played a leading role in establishing the Nottingham High School. Then in 1706 St Mary's opened its doors to the poor children of Nottingham and founded the Bluecoat charity school. The 'principal aim of the school was to train poor children in the knowledge of God', alongside providing vital education and skills for life.

It started out in the church porch under the archway before moving to its own building nearby on High Pavement. Very appropriately in 2017 the expanding Bluecoat Academy was renamed the Archway Learning Trust.

It was the same through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As many of you know the population of the city expanded dramatically from 29k to 240k. In every decade the church was bold and creative in responding to the opportunities and need that was all around.

In 1810 St. Mary's Vestry Society purchased a building on Barker Gate to establish another school for the education of poor boys. Then the St. Mary's Girls School opened in 1835 close by on Plumtre Place.

In 1875 it was instrumental in founding Nottingham High School for Girls. By 1901 there were 868 children enrolled in Sunday School supported by an army of volunteers.

What's more between 1822 and 1888 St Mary's was the principal partner in helping to plant 14 new parish churches across what was previously the Parish of St Mary's, including Trinity Church which was wonderfully replanted in 2017.

It is my prayer that St Mary's can enter into a new season of courageous mission, reflecting the compassionate love of God portrayed so movingly in Hosea 11. The prophet describes how God yearns for his lost children:

*"I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them."*

I don't know what this might mean for St Mary's and other churches across the city. But I pray that this can be a place that not only holds the story and heritage of the city, and serves well the civic life of Nottingham, but also where future generations can get 'lost in wonder, love and praise.'

That will mean building on the present ministry of this church and the outstanding musical tradition that the choir makes possible. But also to initiate in time new worshipping communities that connect in different ways with the fast changing and diverse cultures that reflect this world city.

Who knows in what ways Nottingham may continue to change over the next decade: there will be new opportunities for engagement with children, youth and students; potential for new creativity in the arts, engagement with local businesses, continuing to respond to the needs of

the poor, fostering ever deeper partnerships with churches and other key stake-holders across the city.

But for Tom and Jo and those of you who make up the present congregation, do not be overwhelmed by your diocesan bishop's expectations. Heaven knows your weakness and your limitations – as well as mine.

Heaven also stands on tip-toe to see what you will do with the abundant resources God has and will entrust to you, above all his unlimited compassion and amazing grace.

So like Jesus, make it your highest priority to lose yourself in his presence and find yourself in his good purposes. And to share the ministry of Mary and Joseph as you care for and nurture future followers of Christ, who will get lost here and be found here, and go out from here to change the world to the glory of God. Amen.