



# CATHOLIC CHAPLAINCY TO THE LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITIES

The University Church of St Philip Neri Church ~ "The Oratory Church"

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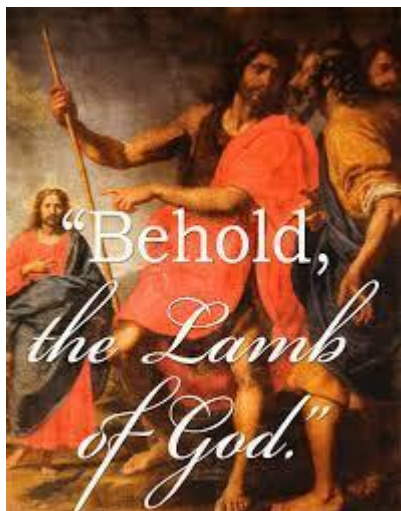
Chaplain: Fr Neil Ritchie

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**14<sup>th</sup>  
January  
2024**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday  
in  
Ordinary  
Time  
(Year B)**



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If you want to contact Fr Neil privately, use:  
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[h.koubkova@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:h.koubkova@rcaol.org.uk)

Events for Students and University Members:

## Masses & Services This Week:

**Monday: 8.15am** Mass at the MC Convent (55 Seel St)  
**Tuesday: Morning prayer 8am, followed by or breakfast; Mass 6pm \***  
**Wednesday :** No 12.30 Mass or lunchtime meeting on account of the funeral of Mary Grazulis (see below)  
**Thursday:** Adoration 5.30pm  
**Saturday:** Mass 9.30am (in church)\*  
\*events in the chaplaincy; Blackburne Place entrance

## Confession (The Sacrament of Reconciliation)

From next week, you will be able to come to confession in Church (in the side room) from **5.15pm-5.35pm on Sundays. The Main church doors will be open from 5.15pm.** You will be able to confess either face to face, or 'through the grill.'

## Retreat Weekend – February 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> at Wistaston Hall, Crewe, with the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia

You can now collect application forms from Fr Neil or Hana. Return them with your payment (£40) and we will put your name on the list. Places are limited, so don't delay!

**Gardening on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> Jan., 10am-12**  
– come and spend a couple of hours helping keep our beautiful garden tidy. Bacon butties afterwards. Mass before at 9.30am in Church (come to the back door)

## Easter 2024 | Thursday 28th - Sunday 31st March

Would you like to dive deeper into the mystery of death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? And in a beautiful setting of Yorkshire countryside? Then come and spend this year's Easter at Ampleforth Abbey, York, there is a group of young adults and students travelling from Liverpool!



The retreat is donations based, inclusive of accommodation and full board (the food is nice!). There is a high demand and the registration closes at the end of January. Everyone registers individually but indicate you travel with Liverpool group at [www.ampleforthabbey.org.uk/easter-triduum-retreat-0](http://www.ampleforthabbey.org.uk/easter-triduum-retreat-0)

If you are interested and/or have questions speak to Hana after the Mass.

**Weekly Collection & other donations, you can pay online at** [philipnerihouse.sumupstore.com](http://philipnerihouse.sumupstore.com)  
Thank you so much for your contributions



**Staff & PhD Group:** Will be re-starting for the term on **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January at 6pm** at the chaplaincy. We meet every other Wednesday during university term time for a fellowship, prayer and faith-based discussion. Open to all university staff and doctoral students.

**Mary Grazulis R.I.P. :** you may recall that Mary tragically died in a road traffic accident while on her way to Mass here a few weeks ago: her funeral Mass will take place in the Cathedral (Blessed Sacrament Chapel) at 10am on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January. Fr Neil will be the celebrant. Because of this there is **no Mass or lunchtime meeting at Faith Express this week**

**Please note:** all chaplaincy events are open to university members who are **18 yrs of age or older**. If you are under 18 at the moment, please make yourself known to Fr Neil or to Hana

----- **Vegetarian, Vegan or special diets:** for events with catering, we are happy to provide suitable alternatives if you let us know in advance you are coming, and tell us what you can or can't have!

# Theology...what is it?

## What does it do?

Before Christmas I write a couple of reflections on Dogma and Doctrine. Now I want to write about Theology – a word that you've all heard and that is often used, but often also not really properly understood!

Fr Aidan Nicholls, a Dominican Friar, wrote an excellent book called "The Shape of Catholic Theology [1991]". He first of all debunks some false definitions of, or reactions to theology, before going on to give a working definition: "*Theology is the disciplined exploration of what is contained in revelation* (p.32)" It is **disciplined** because it requires some intellectual and academic rigour, and that is what would be expected of the student of theology in an academic institution. Not that theology should be restricted to the world of academia: increasingly, lay people are becoming interested in theology, and reading or following courses, without necessarily planning to become theologians.

Secondly, Fr Nicols calls it an **exploration** of revelation. When we looked at doctrine, we discovered that doctrine is, in essence, what the Church teaches about what is revealed. Dogmas are particular definitions of certain 'key points' of revelation – often points where there has been some dispute over what God has revealed, and the teaching authority of the Church has had to establish definitively what is to be believed. Catechesis is the process of passing on the Word of God (Scripture and Tradition) to others – whether children, or adults learning about the Catholic Faith – which is the case with Yasmin, Rosie and Maria in our RCIA group.

But **theology** is the business of *exploring* that revelation. It is an act of service to the Church. There is a tension at the heart of theology. On the one hand, theologians are often, like all explorers, 'exploring' new ground, asking new questions. But on the other hand, theology must remain faithful to the core deposit of faith. Here is what the Church's document on the Vocation of the Theologian says: *Theology has importance for the Church in every age so that it can respond to the plan of God "who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4). In times of great spiritual and cultural change, theology is all the more important. Yet it also is exposed to risks since it must strive to "abide" in the truth (cf. Jn 8:31), while at the same time taking into account the new problems which confront the*

*human spirit. In our century, in particular, during the periods of preparation for and implementation of the Second Vatican Council, theology contributed much to a deeper "understanding of the realities and the words handed on"(1). But it also experienced and continues to experience moments of crisis and tension.*

In other words, theology helps us to penetrate more deeply the mystery of the faith, and it helps us to understand the "signs of the times": how is the faith to be articulated and understood in each new age? How do new insights from the world around us shed new light on our faith? The Catholic faith is not something completely fixed and immutable: it is alive and organic; one might say *reflexive*.

Theology has certain branches as it explores the different aspects and applications of our faith: fundamental, moral, pastoral, systematic and spiritual.

Are there different theologies? Yes – many! The great theological voices of the history of the Church – Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Karl Rahner to name but a few, each attempted to construct a theological 'system'. Augustine drew on Plato; Thomas on Aristotle; Rahner drew on more contemporary trends in philosophy. St Paul, in the New Testament, is attempting to make sense of his conversion to Christ, by reflecting on the death of Christ – and also develops in his letter the implications of the Christian message for how we live, how communities should be ordered, and so on.

There are theologies which reflect different areas of Christian concern. Soteriology, to take one example, is the exploration of what it means to be saved. New theologies appear as new areas of concern come into focus: Eco-theology is the exploration of our relationship with the rest of the created order.

Despite different theological systems and different areas of concern, still, one can speak of a certain **unity** in Catholic theology because of its being centred around the core of revealed truth, and, of course, being centred on the person of Christ himself. I hope this gives you some insight into the rich and fascinating world of theology, and how it relates to the broader framework of Christian life. Happy theologising!

Have a great week!

*Fr Neil*