



The Catholic Parish of Saint Gregory the Great Northampton



PART OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF NORTHAMPTON, REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 234091



“A truly thriving Catholic community, confidently and humbly proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.”



An Answer to Prayer

We now know who our new Bishop is to be: Canon David Oakley, at present the Rector of Oscott Seminary. His Episcopal Ordination and installation as Bishop will be on the feast of St Joseph, 19th March in the Cathedral at 11.00 am.

At his welcome in the Cathedral last Wednesday he said:

“I thank His Holiness Pope Francis and his advisors for entrusting me with this great responsibility and I hope that I will be able to live up to their confidence in me.

I am incredibly aware of my own limitations and frailties, my weaknesses and my sins. A lot of faces and names come to mind. That great crowd of witnesses throughout my life, my family and friends, parishioners growing up as a boy in South Birmingham and all the priests and bishops who have taught me the Gospel and helped me become a disciple of Christ and have given me that encouragement that we all need in the community of faith.

I can't deny it; there is a real sadness in my heart in leaving that diocesan family that I have belonged to all my life and this summer, for forty years of priesthood. But at the same time, I know that we live our lives by the vision of faith that others have passed on to us, not least, the great saints in our history. Of course, over the past few weeks we have had the image here of the crib scene in our churches and our homes to be able to come and pray



before. I have been asking Our Lady and especially St Joseph to pray for me and to intercede for us all in the Diocese of Northampton. What a wonderful image God gives us of what faith is when we look at the Christ-child in his weakness and littleness and his vulnerability and I find great courage and inspiration from that.

So I look forward to working with you all, and together that we can continue the great work that Bishop Peter has done over the past fourteen years. I look forward especially to working with the priests in the diocese, some of whom I have been privileged to know, two of whom are class-mates, and the seminarians, and I look forward to working with the people; those who are more closely involved in the work of the diocese and all those who we meet in our parishes.

It is not easy at the moment to be a person of faith in our society but we must ever be focussed always on God's grace because we don't have to do it by our own effort, we do it by the Lord's grace so I'm going to rely on that and I invite you to rely on that too.

Let's keep each other in prayer over the next few weeks and let's pray that as this new chapter in the Diocese of Northampton opens so all of us together will be able to continue that great mission we have been entrusted with in building God's Kingdom in this part of his vineyard.”

And more “Thank-you s”

Today we will welcome Louise Danielczuk to talk to us about the work of the Hope Centre. Over the Christmas season donations have reached £710.48; anything given further to that will be added to make an even bigger contribution to the work of this important facility supporting the homeless in our town. Please keep Valerie Hanson, one of the founders of the Hope Centre in your prayers in her illness.

A further thank you to all who contribute to the “Red Box” appeal for the overseas mission work of the Church. The interim figure for last year is £2,873.53; when Gift Aid is added it will probably exceed £3,000, a record for this parish, and making us among the most generous in the diocese! Thank you, too to Des and Mary Keohane, retiring from being our local red box representatives.

Notices of Interest

Shared Bible Study for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will be on Wednesday evening, 22nd January at Abington Avenue United Reformed Church; refreshments from 7.00 pm, start at 7.30. All are welcome; this year's theme has been prepared by Christians in Malta.

The Repository: The Repository has now reverted to its normal pattern - open after Sunday Masses. We have a new set of blank cards made by the nuns of the Carmelite Convent at Quindenham which are now on display. Several people asked for blank cards. These are a bit special, as well as supporting a good cause. *Kathleen Healey*

Bible Alive for January is now available in the lobby area. It has daily readings & good articles - all for only £2:50! **Please remember to put money in the box marked 'Books & Papers' in the entrance lobby.**

Prayers for the Sick List: The list is once again becoming difficult to fit in to the Newsletter. Would everybody please have a look through the list and let me know who needs to be kept on. **Any names that I haven't been asked to keep on the list by 19th January will be deleted.** Many thanks. Caryll

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: Please remember this important spiritual powerhouse of the parish. Exposition begins after the morning liturgy of Word and Communion on Thursdays and continues until 6.45 pm. Anyone able to come during the afternoon would be especially welcome. **Throughout the winter, this will be in the Sacristy, which should be more comfortable.**

Looking forward to Lent! There will be a course on Tuesday evenings through Lent using the talks by Bishop Robert Barron entitled "The Mystery of God". It would be particularly suitable to all who have done the Alpha course, although everyone is welcome. We live in an age in which atheism is becoming increasingly active and militant, and in which many regard religion as irrational or even dangerous. Authors like Richard Dawkins and many others make the case against religion. This course helps us to give a rational answer, and to draw people who have been sucked into un-belief back to God

Ceili Dancing: Wednesday evenings, starts 8pm. Learn Ceili Dancing in a friendly atmosphere at St Gregory's Hall from 8pm – 9.15pm. All ages welcome! Ceád Mile Failte. For further info please phone Pat Franks on 07710624921

Becoming a Catholic: For adults interested in becoming a Catholic, the parish runs Journey in Faith process (RCIA). Also offered for adults who are Catholic, but have not received all the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation & Eucharist. Please speak to Alex Heath (07963032175), Fr Andrew or Maria Heath.

Bl. Cyprian Tansi Prayer Group meets 1st Saturday of every month in the Sacristy, 10am. **Next meeting February 1st.** All welcome.

Vianney Mission Prayer Group meets 2nd Wednesday of every month in the Sacristy, 6pm - 7pm. **Next meeting February 12th.** All welcome.

Choir Matters: The next practice is Feb 6, then Lent preparation for Easter: Mar 5, 12, 19, 26, Apr 2, followed by 1st Thurs. of the month: May 7, etc. New members are always welcome especially if they sing and are good at hill-walking (steps to the choir gallery are steep). *Alec*

The Hope Centre are looking for empty ice cream tubs and margarine tubs (NOT yoghurt pots). Please continue to donate only the large ice cream tubs and margarine tubs, as these will be used for placing dinners and puddings in for the homeless. Thank you!

Bible Timeline courses. There will be **two new Timeline courses** in January at St. Gregory's Church. Mondays in the sacristy at 1pm: ROMANS & Tuesdays in the sacristy at 10am: JAMES. There will also be a course starting 25th February 2020 for 5 weeks on Tuesdays at 10am in the sacristy at St Gregory's: A BIBLICAL WALK WITH MARY in connection with the rededication of England as Mary's Dowry. Don't forget the Bible Timeline course at Sacred Heart continues Tuesdays, 10.15am, term time until Easter 2020. During Lent there will be a course entitled "The Mystery of God", from Bishop Robert Barron. **Information on local courses can be found at: www.bible-groups.info/timeline**

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next Baptism Preparation Session will be on Monday 20th January, 7pm, in the Sacristy.

First Holy Communion – 2020 The next preparation session for children is on Saturday 11th January at Sacred Heart Church Hall, from 2.00 pm until 4.30 pm. . It is also essential that children attend Mass each week.

Confirmation Preparation. Classes begin in January 2020 & will generally be held on Saturday afternoons leading to Confirmation in July. If you have problems attending registration, please email Kathleen on kathfish@hotmail.com

Tots @St Gregory's: If you have charge of a pre-school baby or child on Tuesday mornings, come to Tots @ St Gregory's which runs in the parish hall, 9:30-11:30. We are a friendly, welcoming group where all have fun; refreshments are provided. The cost is £1 for each adult regardless of how many children you bring! We run throughout the school terms.

Society for the Protection of Unborn Children - Youth

Conference 2020: SPUC Northampton would like to sponsor a young person aged 18-25 to attend the 2020 SPUC Youth Conference. The conference runs from Friday 28th February to Sunday 1st March at the Willows Training Centre, Wyboston Lakes Resort, Wyboston, Bedford. This is a fantastic opportunity for a young person to be with like-minded people, sharing the pro-life message and listening to some inspirational speakers. The only stipulation is that the person chosen will have to provide their own transport to and from the conference. SPUC Northampton will cover the cost of all meals, accommodation and social activities. If you are interested or would like to have more details then please contact William Currie at wpcurrie@btinternet.com or leave your details with Father Andrew.

Society for the Protection of Unborn Children- 'Tiny Feet' coffee morning:

Please come to our coffee morning from 10.30am on Saturday 25th January, in the parish hall at St Gregory's, in order to help us raise funds for SPUC. Apart from the chance to socialise, eat good cake & escape Saturday morning chores, it will be an opportunity to find out more about the work of SPUC and meet your local members. Even if you may not be able to become directly involved in pro-life work, your support of this event will be a vital contribution in our efforts to spread the pro-life message. Please keep us & all unborn children in your prayers.

Faith group leader weekend – 14 to 16 February, Kings Park

Centre, Northampton. I hope that leaders in the parishes will take advantage of this opportunity for training and formation. It is suitable for anyone leading RCIA, Lent or Advent Groups, Bible Timeline etc. The weekend will cover small group skills, leading prayer, forming a group and tricky situations. Places are limited so booking essential. <http://formationpathways.co.uk/events/>.

Last chance to visit the Crib: Later this Sunday the crib will be put away as we enter the season of Ordinary Time tomorrow. Many thanks for your donations to the Hope Centre; these are gratefully received.

Scripture Readings 12th January 2020, Baptism of the Lord, Year A

In this “servant song” second Isaiah rejoices when, in 539 BC, King Cyrus released Israel from their exile in Babylon. But he asked how had this come about? It was not any human agency. It was Israel’s God who freed his servant, Israel, whom he had formed and chosen for a purpose, and given his spirit.

After calling all to praise the Lord, the psalm describes a magnificent theophany: God’s majesty revealed in a tremendous thunderstorm.

In Acts, Peter applies this message to Jesus, whom “God anointed with the Holy Spirit”. Peter had just had a vision showing that nothing we eat can make us unclean. Therefore he felt willing to enter the house of Cornelius, against the Jewish Law. Then the Holy Spirit came upon this Gentile household. So Peter had to baptise

them: he now understands **how** the Gospel must be taken to Gentiles, in spite of Jewish purity laws.

After a big build-up by the Baptist about the coming of the powerful messiah, the adult Jesus appears for the first time in this Gospel, and quietly insists on being baptised by John. Jesus has to be identified with sinners to fulfill God’s plan. God then confirms Jesus as his Son. Thus fortified, Jesus will then be led into the wilderness to be tested by the devil.

Psalm Response: **The Lord will bless his people with peace.**

(Isaiah 42:1-4,6-7; Psalm 28(29); Acts 10:34-38; Matthew 3:13-17)

Chris Oliver

The Season of Creation

Actions to Live Simply :

Tip No. 31: Actions to LiveSimply: Pray regularly for the next generation, who will have to live with rising temperatures, floods, water and electricity shortages and migration of peoples suffering the worst extremes of climate change.

Tip No. 32: Actions to LiveSimply: Join CAFOD website , to be included in petitioning parliament for United Nations action on climate change.

Climate Change is causing a devastating drought in Zambia and Zimbabwe, and up to half the population of those countries are on the brink of starvation. The CAFOD Lent fast day appeal will help to support the healthcare work in Zimbabwe, and CAFOD has already given £50,000 in emergency response. Pope Francis has been reminding us that the poorest people suffer disproportionately from climate change and natural disasters; one example of this is that where bread can be bought in Zimbabwe it now costs 15 times more than it did a year ago. For us, that would mean a cost of up to £15 for a loaf. For the poorest people, even bread is unaffordable.

Many thanks to Harry and Helen Charles who have offered to co-ordinate our parish’s work towards the “Living Simply Award”. Anyone who is interested is being involved in this, please contact them, or speak to Fr Andrew

St Hilary and St Anthony of Egypt

Hilary was born into a wealthy pagan family around the year 300, and his reading of the Bible led him to becoming a Christian. Around the year 350 he was chosen as Bishop of Poitiers. This was a time of difficulty in the Church as the understanding of the manner in which Jesus can be understood as both God and Man was not fully recognised, and there were many who did not acknowledge Jesus as God. Hilary wrote extensively on this subject, and wrote a commentary of St Matthew’s Gospel, and exposition of the Psalms and many other books. As we celebrate this “Year of the Word”, may St Hilary pray for us that we may better understand the Word of God.

St Anthony of Egypt is regarded as the founder of the monastic life, although he was far from the first to embrace the ascetic life. However, he was the first to codify a “monastic rule”. His style of life is not the vocation of all Christians, but could be seen as teaching us all to “live more simply so that others may simply live”. He was a near contemporary with St Hilary, being born in 251 and dying in 356, and like St Hilary, was a strong defender of the orthodox Christian understanding of the person of Jesus as both fully God and fully Man. On his day, as always we pray that we may love God above all things; above our own comfort and selfish desires.

The Year of the Word



We ended the Gospel last Sunday with the wise men leaving Bethlehem and returning home without going back to Herod in Jerusalem. We know that the Holy Family then fled to Egypt to protect the child Jesus from the wrath of King Herod and the slaughter of the ‘Holy Innocents’. They could only return after the death of Herod (*Matthew 2:13-20*).

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Herod met a singularly unpleasant death. The details are recorded in his ‘Antiquities’, Chapter 6:5, and are too gruesome to be printed here! The exact date of this is uncertain, but probably between 4BC and 1 BC, which, according to modern dating of the Nativity, would mean that Jesus would have been between 4 and 6 when the Holy Family settled in Nazareth (*Matthew 2:21-23*).

Matthew is telling us this as further evidence that Jesus is fulfilling the Old Testament and Jewish history. There is was a Jewish legend, well-known but not in the Bible that when Abraham was born King Nimrod saw a sign in the stars that he interpreted as signifying the birth of a new ruler who would challenge his authority, so he ordered the slaughter of children. (*Mindel, Nissan. "Nimrod and Abraham – The Two Rivals – Jewish History".*) Jesus is a new Abraham, a new Moses and, as we shall see, a new David. In him the Old Testament is totally fulfilled.

Today we meet the adult Jesus, and the next phase in his life will be in the wilderness, and we have to wait until Lent to take up the chronology again.

Please use this “Year of the Word” to grow in love and understanding of the Scriptures — the course on Matthew will run again this autumn.

