



The Catholic Parish of Saint Gregory the Great Northampton



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

OUR
VISION

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

OUR
VISION

The Gift of Life

On 9th December last year the BBC published on its news website a post entitled “What unites us: 10 reasons why we’re not a divided nation”, (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49762140>) and the fifth was “Supporting a woman’s right to have an abortion”. The evidence for this is from the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey, stating “There is near unanimous support (92% in 2016) for abortions when a woman’s health is in danger, according to the BSA survey. And since 2005, support for allowing an abortion if the woman does not wish to have a child has increased from 60 to 69%.” It is not clear how recent this survey actually is, but the rise in support for abortion exactly reflects the rise in secularisation. Just as active Christian faith is in a minority in this country, so too is belief in the sanctity of human life in a minority.



This picture evokes in most of us an instinct of protection and care, but for the abortionist, has no value at all.

Our challenge is one of conversion; while people do not regard the unborn as people with a right to be born, innocent vulnerable souls will face capital punishment for the only crime that carries the death penalty; that of being unwanted.

Pope Benedict used to speak frequently of the danger of what was translated into English as “relativism”; this is a key example of this flawed way of thinking. Under relativist thinking, the status of the unborn baby depends of how it is thought of. If it is a wanted baby, it has infinite value; the mother will ensure that her life-style will provide the best possible protection for her much-loved child. If, on the other hand, the pregnancy is unwanted, the same baby becomes of no value at all. This is not an acceptable moral argument.

It is important not to confuse the normal with the exceptional; that there may be exceptional cases where a choice has to be made between the life of a mother and her unborn child should not influence the far more (over 97%, according to the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children) common reason of simply not wanting the child.

We are blessed in this parish of having a LIFE house, and from its foundation, we have sought to provide help in every way possible for this. When it opened parishioners decorated it, we have helped fund improvements and help to fund the support worker who looks after the three adult residents who are either in the latter stages of pregnancy or are new mothers. Through the LIFE Charity we seek to give them support towards independent living with their new baby. This Sunday there is a special collection at the end of each Mass for the work of our LIFE house.

Also at the end of Mass there will be leaflets handed out inviting you to the “Tiny Feet” coffee morning on 25th January organised by the local branch of SPUC. (See inside for further information.)

To be “Pro-Life” means more than protecting the unborn. It means valuing the gift of life from conception to natural death. It means protecting all those who are exploited in any way, victims of “modern slavery” and trafficking, refugees, the homeless, the disabled. It also means recognising that we all inhabit a single planet, and that those in other countries also deserve our protection. Our support for the Fair Trade movement, for CAFOD and Missio are all part of this.

Fundamentally, though, the need is to change the hearts and minds of people that they will come to realise that life is a precious gift from God, freely given and to be enjoyed by all. To appreciate this, people need to have a genuine faith in God. This means that the statistic we should be worrying about is the rise in secularisation. This means that our efforts for evangelisation are vital in our protection of life.

Notices of Interest

The Repository: Once again, the Repository has had a successful Christmas season. I would like to thank you Parishioners for all the support, which has enabled us to make substantial donations to our Parish charity & to the Hope Centre. Special thanks are due to my loyal band of helpers now & throughout the year, & this year to the “heavy lifters” who made the displays in the Hall possible. So thank you to Tom, Cliff & the Anachebe family, notably David & Daniel for their cheerfulness & smiles! We still need extra help after Masses if anyone feels they could volunteer. Happy New Year to you all.
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

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

The family of Maureen Gray would like to thank everyone for their prayers, Mass cards and expressions of sympathy at this sad time. We very much appreciate the support and kindness. *Anna Smith*

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.

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!

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. **Throughout the winter, this will be in the Sacristy, which should be more comfortable.**

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 January 8th.** All welcome.

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.

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**

Please visit the Epiphany crib,

which shows Our Lady seated with the child Jesus on her knee. It is the figure of Our Lady of Walsingham which normally lives where the crib is now placed. When this was made for us, we were unaware that a statue in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London dating from the 12th century closely resembles our image of Our Lady of Walsingham.



Recent research indicates that there is a possibility that the V&A statue may actually be the original statue of Our Lady of Walsingham! (*Walsingham Pilgrims and Pilgrimage* by Fr Michael Rear, appendix 3| — photograph by Deacon Michael Fleming)

Scripture Readings 5th January 2020, Epiphany, Year A

Third Isaiah was writing just after the Israelites had returned from exile in Babylon. Participation in the future messianic salvation is offered to all who believe in the Lord and keep his commandments. Isaiah visualises the new Jerusalem, illuminated by God, to which all peoples will stream and a time when their offerings will be acceptable. This is good news for the whole world.

The psalm offers coronation wishes to a king – more than an earthly king, and so seen as Messianic.

The vision of the universal Church Paul describes in Ephesians matches Isaiah's image of the new Jerusalem. Paul sees the Church, led by the Spirit, as Christ's body, part of God's plan for the whole of creation. And Paul joyfully realises that it was always part of God's plan that the gospel message is to be taken to all: Gentiles as well as Jews are to share in the inheritance promised by God.

In Luke's Gospel an angel announced Jesus' birth to poor Jewish shepherds, excluded by their occupation from Temple worship. Today we hear Matthew's description of Gentile scholars travelling from afar to bring kingly offerings to the new-born child. But they needed the Jewish scriptures to help find him. We too need the Old Testament to help us understand God's plan and what he has done in Jesus.

Psalm Response: **All nations shall fall prostrate before you, O Lord.**

(Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 71(72); Ephesians 3:2-3,5-6; Matthew 2:1-12)

Chris Oliver

The Season of Creation

Actions to Live Simply :

Tip No. 29: Live sustainably with creation: Chose to have a Drive Nowhere day once a week. You may need to agree a carshare at work or school, walk or take the bus.

Tip No. 30: Reflection & Worship: A prediction, publicised by Mark Carney, says Sea level will rise nearly 30 feet. Take a silent walk to think and pray about the beauty of God's creation of trees and the damage we are doing causing Global warming.

In order to reduce the carbon footprint of the parish through the winter the Thursday Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will be in the Sacristy. This should also make it more comfortable for those praying, and (as a spin-off benefit) reduce the heating bill for the parish. The parish is also investigating the possibility of rainwater harvesting for flushing the toilets.

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 Raymond of Peñafort

Living into his 100th year (from 1175 to 1275), St Raymond accomplished much in his life. He is the Patron of Canon Lawyers, but a more important theme of his life was that of evangelisation. He joined the Dominican Order (The "Order of Preachers") and his preaching is credited with making over 10,000 converts! He asked his contemporary St Thomas Aquinas to write a book to help in the

work of evangelisation, which is the origin of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. He collaborated with St Peter Nolasco in the founding of the Order of Our Lady of Mercy, which was the inspiration for the modern Guild of Our Lady of Ransom, which prays for and works for the conversion of England and Wales.

The Year of the Word



Today's Gospel of the visit of the Magi gives us an important lesson in the way in which stories in the Bible can so often be embroidered

or mis-told. This story is only found in Matthew's Gospel, although he does not tell of the shepherds. However there are other significant ways in which Matthew is telling a different story from Luke. Matthew does not speak of the day that Jesus was born but "after Jesus had been born" (*Matthew 2:1*) Cribs which show the wise men at the same time as the shepherds are not being true to the Bible! The word used to describe Jesus is "child", not "baby", and where they find him is not in a stable but in a house. Cribs with straw on the floor and cattle are also not being true to the Bible! (Even Gentile da Fabriano. [see under the Altar] can get it wrong!) Neither are the "Wise Men" "Kings".



Why is this important? First, because Matthew is recording the recognition by the Gentiles of Jesus as King, God and victim. At the end of his Gospel, Matthew record that Jesus told his disciples to disciple "all nations" (ie the Gentile peoples). Second, Matthew is concerned to show that the coming of Jesus fulfils the prophets, and in Isaiah 60:5-6 we read "The wealth of nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you. . . They shall bring gold and frankincense, and proclaim the praise of the Lord."

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.

