



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.”**

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The City of Love

Verona in northern Italy is sometimes known as “The City of Love” because it was the hometown of the Montague and Capulet families, described by Shakespeare as “*Two households, both alike in dignity, in fair Verona*”. It is not the house where Juliet lived that concerns us today, but rather the school and seminary there, where in the early nineteenth century a priest called Nicola Mazza taught mathematics, physics and world history. However, his great ambition was to evangelise Africa. He had the nickname of “*Don Congo*”!

One of his students was Daniel Comboni, son of an olive farmer in the village of Limone sul Garda. The name of the village has nothing to do with lemons, but derived from the Latin “*Limina*”, meaning a border or threshold; it being at the border of the lake, or perhaps a frontier town. It suffered from being fought over in many conflicts and coming under a variety of different empires and states in its history. However, it became famous for the cultivation of lemons in the 19th century, indeed, as the most northerly place where citrus fruit could be grown.

In 1843 Daniel was sent to the school for children of poor families in Verona founded by Fr Mazza and went on to the seminary. He was ordained priest in 1854, and three years later, together with five companions, all influenced by Fr Mazza, set sail for Africa, where he stayed for a year before being forced to return to Italy, having contracted malaria.

During his time back in Italy he prayed and reflected on the mission to Africa, and while praying at the tomb of St Peter he was inspired to “save Africa through Africa”. At a time when many people were dismissing the African Continent as incapable of joining the rest of the 'civilised' world, Comboni sent two young Sudanese men to Rome to study for priesthood. This was in marked contrast to the imperial expeditions to Africa of the nations of Europe, seeking to conquer and effectively plunder their colonies to increase their own wealth. He sought to provide education for Africans, and encouraged vocations to priesthood and religious life among them.

In 1877 he was ordained bishop, first as Apostolic Administrator of Central Africa. This was a clear indication that his ideas received approval of Pope Pius IX. He set up his headquarters in Khartoum, and it was there that he died in 1881. The following year the British invaded Sudan, which led to the siege of Khartoum from 1884 to 1885, and then to the events that led to the enslavement of St Josephine Bakhita, whose feast-day was yesterday.

Comboni realised that to ensure continuity to his mission to the vast African continent, he needed to form a group of priests, lay brothers and sisters. He started in 1867 in Verona by putting together a group of men - missionary priests and lay brothers - to whom he gave a rule for missionary life. Later, in 1872, he founded the 'Pie Madri della Nigrizia', the Comboni Sisters of Verona. He wrote, 'I only have one life to consecrate for the salvation of those souls: I wish I had a thousand lives to spend to such a purpose.' His wish is fulfilled in the 4,000 Comboni missionaries of many nationalities who now work in over 40 countries world wide. Among these many nationalities, a number of Comboni missionaries, priests and sisters, come from the British Isles and are now working in different continents and ministries.

He preached and wrote about the all-embracing concept of mission and the direct involvement in missionary work of religious men, women and lay people working together beyond the boundaries of nationalities. At the time, this sounded like Utopia; today these key elements of mission are taken for granted in the Church.

The most profound aspect of Comboni's prophetic vision was in his understanding of martyrdom: he yearned to be so fully united with his Lord that he would willingly sacrifice his life for the Lord and for Africa; like the grain of wheat that would die and produce a harvest for the whole of Central Africa.

His plan and work have encouraged followers for more than a century to witness to the Gospel by their work, example and, in some cases, physical martyrdom. Today, Comboni missionaries all over the world continue his work, often risking their lives to remain with the people they serve during times of war and famine.

Times and situations have changed since Comboni's time and, as well as Africa, his followers are now present in Europe, the Americas and Asia. The ideal, however, remains the same: that, wherever they are, they may help the most abandoned of our world to savour the love of God through works of charity and to proclaim the fullness of life promised by Christ through the preaching of the Gospel.

Today we welcome Fr Martin Devenish of the Verona Fathers to celebrate Mass and appeal for their work. At the heart of this, as of all work for the Gospel is the message of the love of God. The love of Romeo and Juliet is a famous and tragic love story. The story of the Gospel is the best love story of all time; the story of the love of God which is revealed in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Notices of Interest

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*

Maureen Moriarty and Family would sincerely like to thank everyone for their support, prayers and Mass cards in their recent bereavement at the loss of Julie. They have been overwhelmed and comforted by the kindness shown by everyone.

Siobhan O'Donovan would like to thank everybody for their sponsorship of The Big Sleep Out for the Hope Centre! She is still collecting sponsorship money & will be in the repository shop after 11am or give it to Dorothy in the repository shop after the 9am Mass. Thank you very much for your support.

Bible Alive for February 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.**

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.**

CAFOD Supporters' Event: Come and hear from CAFOD's Director, Christine Allen, about her experience visiting our partners & giving input at global events; be inspired by other supporters & have an energising session. Sat 22 Feb - St Augustine Church, Langcliffe Drive, Heelands, MK13 7PL 10:30-1.30pm (coffee/tea from 10am with shared lunch from 1:30pm). Please let us know you are coming on 01494863777 or northampton@cafod.org.uk.

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. On Fridays through Lent there will be our usual shared Stations of the Cross with St Matthew's, starting at 7.30 pm.

Preparing for the Rededication of England as Mary's Dowry: There is a "do-it-yourself retreat" book available for free entitled "33 Days to Morning Glory", and everyone is invited to use this in preparation for the re-dedication of England to Our Lady at the time of the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord (March 25th). The recommended start date is Friday 21st February.

Life House Quiz With Fish & Chip Supper: A quiz, with Fish & chips supper in aid of the Life House, will take place on Friday 6th March in St. Gregory Church Hall. Tickets cost £10 & includes the price of the fish & chips. Own alcohol can be brought. Tickets available from Sun. 9th of Feb. after 9am Mass (Marcelle Brown) & 11am Mass (Siobhan O'Donovan) from the repository shop. Thank you for your support.

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 will be for 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*

Fundraising Dinner for the Year of the Word Festival (Wordfest): The Bible Timeline Team are raising funds in order to pay for people from the local area to attend the Year of the Word Diocesan Scripture Festival, Sat. 6th June. There will be a sumptuous fundraising dinner (Shrove) Tuesday 25th Feb. 7.30pm in the hall here at St Gregory's. There are a limited number of tickets available, which are for a suggested donation of £12.50 each. Your support for this event will help others to encounter the Word of God anew in their lives! To reserve a ticket please contact Catherine Mulligan on mulligancatherine@hotmail.co.uk or Alex Heath on 07963032175 or heath@nores.org.uk as soon as possible. Thank you. For more information about the WORDFEST2020 festival please see: www.northamptondiocese.org/wordfest

Bl. Cyprian Tansi Prayer Group meets 1st Saturday of every month in the Sacristy, 10am. **Next meeting March 7th.** All welcome.

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

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/>.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next Baptism Preparation Session will be 7pm in the Sacristy on Monday 10th February.

First Holy Communion — 2020 The next preparation session for children is on Saturday 28th March at Sacred Heart Church Hall, from 2.00 pm until 4.30 pm. . It is also essential that children attend Mass each week.

Confirmation - 3rd Preparation Session: Saturday 21st March at Sacred Heart Church hall from 3pm-6.30pm.

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- Next meeting 200,000 unborn children were killed in the United Kingdom last year through abortion. Christ Our Saviour suffered agony on the cross and shed his blood for our sins. The killing of these innocent souls contributed to Christ's pain and suffering. As Christians we have a duty to fight this evil. **Please help us do this by attending the next meeting of SPUC on Friday 28th February at 7pm in the sacristy.** If you cannot attend the meeting then please consider saying the rosary imploring The Mother of God to intercede for these little ones by protecting them from harm.

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 Fáilte. For further info please phone Pat Franks on 07710624921

Scripture Readings 9th February 2020, 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

After the exiles returned to rebuild Jerusalem there were many difficulties and they lost heart. Third Isaiah writing after 500BC told them this was because of a lack of social justice: ritual and fasting have value only if they are expressions of a just society. Today's reading and the verse before it give the essentials of true religion: deal justly with your neighbour, free the oppressed, feed the hungry. Then your good deeds will influence others and give glory to God, without drawing attention to yourselves.

The psalm praises the virtues of the God-fearing man, who lights the way for others lost in confusion.

Paul says that when he came to the Corinthians, he did not draw attention to himself by relying on the powers of clever oratory to convince people about the 'mystery' of God – the salvific events to be revealed in the age to come. No, he believes "Jesus Christ and him

crucified", the message itself, making visible the power of God, is strong enough to convince.

In Matthew's gospel Jesus began his ministry in Galilee, previously part of the northern kingdom Israel. On a mountain he teaches the beatitudes, before insisting Christians must show the way for all mankind to find the way to God, influencing without seeking to be noticed.

Psalm Response: **The good man is a light in the darkness for the upright.**

(Isaiah 58:7-10; Psalm 111(112); 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Matthew 5:13-16)

Chris Oliver

The Season of Creation

Actions to Live Simply :

Tip No. 39: Living Sustainably with creation: Choose to buy clothes where the materials are all natural e.g. cotton, bamboo and wool. Avoid polyester and mixtures containing polyester. These do not recycle, so dispose of them through Charity shops who find new owners.

Tip No. 40: Living Sustainably with creation: By growing some food ourselves we can reduce the amount being transported from grower to customer. Start with a 'Grow Bag' or plant a small fruit tree. Thinking big: get an allotment.

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

Saints this week

Among the feasts of this week, the highlight is the celebration of Our Lady of Lourdes, which is also the world day of prayer for the sick.

In his book, "The Lady Said" Fr Damien Walne tells of St Bernadette in the convent at Nevers:

"Her bed in the infirmary of St Gildard's Convent was never long without its occupant, causing her superior half-jokingly to ask on one occasion, 'What are you doing in bed, you lazy little thing?' To which Bernadette replied, 'Why, dear Mother, I am doing my work.' 'And what is your work?' 'To be ill.'" He then goes on to relate how so many pilgrims to Lourdes have not had miraculous healings in a medical sense, but have rather come to terms with their illness such that it has no longer been a separation between themselves and God.

He tells also of a pilgrim who said 'I came to Lourdes last year and if I'm not cured this time that's it . . . I shan't ever bother to pray again.' He reminds us that "at no time whatsoever did Our Lady say she would heal the sick". Since 1862 there have been only 70 miraculous healings recognised as such by the Church, although some 7,000 have been claimed. However, out of the total number of pilgrims, even 7,000 represents a very small proportion. The true

message of Lourdes lies in the love of the Mother for her Son, and for all those her Son entrusted to her maternal care as he hung on the cross. Our participation in the Day of Prayer for the Sick is not just to ask for a miracle; rather it is to express our love for our sick neighbour. Fr Damien makes the point in his book of Our Lady's smile, which Bernadette describes so often.

In a radio recent programme, a doctor was speaking about a letter he had received from a patient, thanking him for a letter the doctor had written to him. The sentence that touched his was the opening of the letter: 'Dear Mr XXXXXX, it was nice to meet you.' It was that simple line that lifted my spirits because you were addressing me as a person, not just as a case study.

St Bernadette reminds us that the sick are loved by God, that sickness is not a punishment, and that the care of the sick is one of the vital corporal works of mercy.

The Day of Prayer for the sick falls on Tuesday of this week. We express our thanks to all those in our parish who visit the sick, bring them Holy Communion and pray with and for them.

Advance Notice

There will be 40 hours of continuous Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament starting at 7.00 am on Thursday 12th March, and ending at 11.00 pm on Friday 13th March.

Those who are fit and able are asked to pray through the night of 12th to 13th. Prayer groups and others will be asked to sign up so that there will always be people there.



The Year of the Word



The way in which the Gospels are read on Sundays spreads the books over three years. In each year, most of the Sundays of Ordinary Time have the Gospel Reading from either Matthew, Mark or Luke, but leaving the infancy and passion narratives for Christmastide and Passiontide. We read John's Gospel in Lent and Eastertide. This year, we are reading Matthew through Ordinary Time..

Archbishop Fisichella, who is quoted on the front page of this newsletter speaks of his childhood in the 1950s and 60s when the Bible was not opened for him and where the Scriptures were only read in Latin during Mass. It is possible that others of the same generation had a similar experience. He gives this as a reason why this Sunday's theme is of such great importance. It is "a new beginning at the level of evangelisation, of the New Evangelisation", he said.

To help people to read the Gospel, we have a number of copies which are light and easy, and you may be offered one. Please accept it as a gift from the Church, and use it at home to follow the Sunday Mass Gospel readings.