



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

Come Home for Christmas

‘I rejoiced when they said to me: “Let us go to the house of the Lord”’ (Psalm 121:1)

There are two parts to the word “Christmas”; “Christ” and “Mass”. Without both Christ *and* Mass, Christmas is incomplete, and without either, it is meaningless. That is why the secular authorities prefer to talk of “the festive season”, or worse, “Winterval”, or “Crimbo”; a word with no real meaning at all.

While it is important to recognise that many will be celebrating Diwali and others Hanukkah at this time of the year, the Christian heritage represents the bulk of the British population, even though most sadly neglect any sort of Christian observance.

Ignorance or misunderstanding of Christian faith is now endemic in this country. A recent conversation exemplifies this.

“You a Catholic?”

“Yes”

“Is that — like — Christian?”

“Yes. The Catholic Church is the Church founded by Jesus Christ”

“What about Methodist. Is that Christian?”

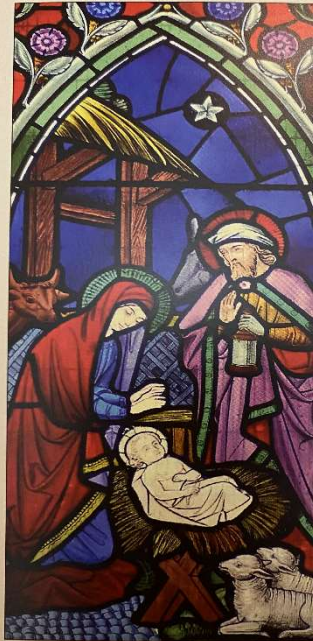
“Yes, but not quite the same as the Catholic Church. But we all worship Jesus.”

The conversation continued in the same vein with the other party clearly lacking any knowledge of Christianity, or indeed of any other religion at all.

He is not to blame for this; our state education system has allowed the teaching of RE to be regarded as unimportant, and the Religious Education Council for England and Wales, a body representing all the major world religions speaks of a “chronic shortage of RE teachers in schools”. Part of the reason they offer for this is that the support given to training RE teachers is significantly less than that given to many other subjects. From a low base, the number starting training as specialist RE teachers dropped to less than half of the number required in the current year, 2023-24.

Thankfully, our Catholic schools are not in such a bad way, and those who have been through one of our own schools should have a good grounding in at least the basis of our faith, and though even the best of teachers may sometimes not succeed with every student!

Comfort & Joy



*be Yours this
Christmas*

It would be wrong to blame teachers or schools for failures to teach the basic truths of our Faith, because that duty, responsibility and joy belongs to parents first of all.

It is also the responsibility of the entire community to help and support our children and young people when there is so much peer-pressure to abandon the Faith, particularly on teenagers.

A recent study suggested that priests and clergy are the 13th most likely group to be replaced by AI. This is on the basis that AI can produce as good or better sermons that most clergy! That is a magnificent misunderstanding of the primary function of the priest! The survey went on to suggest that the decline in churchgoing was because most people believed in science, not religion. That reveals another magnificent misunderstanding. However, it is sadly a widely-held misunderstanding, and one which the Church has not yet properly addressed.

It is a lasting truth that a life without God is a life with something vital missing. Many people realise that there is a gap in their life without realising what that gap is or where it can be filled.

“How are they to hear without someone to tell them” (Romans 10:14). We are

accustomed to wishing people a “Happy Christmas”. What greater happiness can there be than to recognise Christ and share in his Mass?

Copies of this leaflet are being handed out at Mass today, allowing you to give one to a friend or neighbour, and invite them to come with you to the “house of the Lord” to celebrate Christ’s Mass; sharing in the real meaning of the name of the feast.

Please don’t just drop them through a letter-box. Give one to a person with whom you can actually fulfil that offer to go with them. Talk to them about the invitation, and if they express worries, talk to them about their concerns. If they are unfamiliar with the celebration of Mass, sit with them and help them follow what is happening.

Pray for them before you give the invitation, and pray that this may be an experience of rejoicing; when you say to someone: “Let *us* go to the house of the Lord”

Notices of Interest

Repository: There is a display for Christmas - cards, books & items are on sale. Catholic diaries with the order of the Mass are available. **PLEASE** can anyone help with sales to help my loyal, small group of helpers? Anyone with a calculator can do it - all items priced! Please note that we can only accept cash! *Contact Kath.healey.789@gmail.com.*

Bible Alive for January is now available - only £3.00! If you wish to purchase a copy, they are in the narthex as you come into church. December is now sold out! There are, however, several small booklets of Walk With Me available for Advent. Please see the table in the Narthex. Lent and Advent Bible Alives always sell quickly, so it may be an idea to let me know about a month or so before both seasons start & I can increase the amount we order for that period. *Caryll*

Christmas Cards: With the very high cost of postage, you are welcome to leave Christmas Cards for people who attend St Gregory's Church on the table at the back of church. However, **PLEASE** do not just write the Christian name on the envelope!

Thursday Holy Hour & Adoration: Holy Hour remains as Holy Two Hours, from 9am until 11am. It is important that at least two people are present throughout the time of adoration. During cold weather, Adoration will be in the Sacristy.

Missio Matters: To thank you for helping their work on the Foreign Missions, through prayer and donations, Missio would like each of their supporters to have a free calendar for 2024. It tells you dates when you ought to be in church, like Sundays, and lists Saints Days and other feasts along with quotes from people including our Pope Francis. The calendars, with your name on the back, are in the red box as you come into church. Please collect yours ASAP. Items are in alphabetical order. It would help if you keep it that way. God bless. Have a blessed New Year. *Alec*

Church Cleaning: The next clean will be on Wednesday 20th December to get the Church ready for Christmas – all help gratefully received. Thereafter, the routine will revert to last Saturday of the month, starting with 27th January. Thank you!

Bl. Cyprian Tansi Prayer Group continues to pray together online via Skype and by telephone and on the first Saturday of the month, here in the Church, from 10am-12pm.

Tots @ St Gregory's: St Greg's Tiny Tots runs each Tuesday in term time from 9:30-11:30 in the church hall. We charge £1 per group which includes snacks & coffee! If you have care of a pre-school child, please join us!!

Rotas for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: New rotas will be sent out during the week. Should you be away when rostered, please contact Deacon Michael by phone/text on 07999808997 – he will arrange cover. Thank you for your contribution to our Parish Liturgy

Fire Safety – Important notice. Unlit candles **must not** be placed on the trays under the places for candles and candles must not be stacked one on top of another.

Bookings are open for Lux 2024. For school years 7 to 13. Our theme this year is Dive. See the website for more information and to book: <https://nymo.org/lux-dive/>. If you have any questions then please email info@nymo.org.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be on Monday 8th January at 7pm in the Sacristy. Please note you will need to phone Deacon Michael on 07999808997 before you attend, to book a place.

First Holy Communion 2023: All sessions are on Saturday afternoons at Sacred Heart, Weston Favell. Details, dates, times have been given to all those who are registered.

Confirmation in 2024: To be announced.

Mission Northampton: There will be a weekly Zoom course entitled "Secrets of Paul", lasting 10 weeks on Wednesdays starting on 10th January and running until 20th March (with a break for half-term on 21st February). There is a charge of £10 for the course, & visit <https://northamptondiocese.org/courses/secrets-of-paul-online/> to register.

Used Postage Stamps: As Christmas rapidly draws near could I appeal to everyone to save their used postage stamps. My loyal supporters will already know that the used postage stamps raise thousands of pounds for the missions abroad. It all started when a young priest became very ill & was sent back to England to die. He wanted to do something useful with his time, & eventually started collecting used postage stamps & postcards. This caught on in a big way & lots of money was, & still is being, raised. It doesn't cost anything except a bit of time. They are being sent in the name of St Gregory's & I pay the postage myself. The good news is that the young priest is now in his 90s, & still going strong. Truly God works in mysterious ways. Thank you, *Linda Fleming*

Choir Notes: Saturday morning practices will take place 11-12.30pm every week until 17th December. *Alec*

Refreshment Donations:

Below is the schedule for refreshment donations through the year:
From the first Sunday in Advent *The Hope Centre*

to the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord:

From the Second Sunday in ordinary time

Gregory Care

to the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday:

Through Lent and Eastertide:

CAFOD

Ordinary Time until the end of August:

Refreshment Fund

September until the Harvest collection:

CAFOD

After harvest until the beginning of Advent:

The Bible Society

Gregory Care: A massive thank you to all the parishioners of St Gregory's who have made wreaths for our household & those who have donated gifts & crackers for the families Gregory Care supports. Your support has been overwhelming, so too have been the unexpected monetary donations as well as people giving their time, skills & goods. We (Catherine & Carole) are in the privileged position of the 'go between's' & we see the enormous difference these gifts mean to people and how much they are appreciated. Please remember in your prayers all those who have donated to this recent appeal & all those who will benefit from your generosity.

Cathedral Foodstore: Our continued thanks to all who donate to the toiletries for the Foodstore. Please remember that the Foodstore is open to everyone who may be experiencing hardship. Food can be purchased at substantially reduced prices (as it now operates as a food larder) All that is required is a form of ID and a genuine reason for needing to use the larder. It operates between 10:15 - 12:15 every Thursday in the St Thomas Centre (behind the Cathedral).

Please join our Pilgrimage of Peace to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, at the RC Church of the Holy Child and St Joseph, 2 Brereton Rd, Bedford MK40 1HU on Sunday 17 December 2023 from 1 pm to 4 pm. There will be Rosary for Peace, Chaplet of Divine Mercy and Holy Mass as requested by Our Blessed Mother. Call 0795759464 for more info

Mission Prayer

Heavenly Father

it is your will that we should make disciples of all nations.

We ask you to bless the mission of our Diocese of Northampton

and guide our hearts and minds

so that your will might be done

and your kingdom be build up here on earth.

We pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit,

without which our work is in vain,

and we entrust ourselves to your beloved Son,

for we know that he is with us for all time, now and for ever.

Amen

Prayer for Peace for Ukraine and the Holy Land:

Please continue to pray for an end to wars, and for all victims of war:

O God, author and lover of peace,

to know you is to live, to serve you is to reign.

Defend against every attack those who cry to you

so that we, who trust in your protection,

may not fear the weapons of any foe.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,

who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen

10th December 2023, 2nd Sunday of Advent Year B

Isaiah celebrates with fulsome praise their God who has enabled the Israelites to return from exile in Babylon. God has cleared the way for their return, just as He led his people during the Exodus from Egypt. Then God was visible in a small area as a pillar of cloud or fire. Now God's work should be shouted throughout the whole world.

In the Psalm a prophet, after the return from exile, first listens to hear what the Lord has to say, and then reports the joyful happiness revealed to him.

The second letter of Peter, written probably towards the end of the first century, addressed doubts about when Christ would return in majesty. God patiently guides mankind to the promised land of his kingdom, giving everyone plenty of time to turn to him. But the Day of the Lord **will** come, and it will come to all creation, and when we least expect it.

Mark's gospel omits any mention of Jesus' early life. It starts with

Jesus' coming proclaimed by Isaiah and the Baptist. God was revealed to the Jews during the Exodus and in their return from exile. Now He is revealed to the whole world through his Christ, Jesus, confirmed as God's son at his baptism.

Psalm Response:

Let us see, O Lord, your mercy; and give us your saving help.

(Isa 40:1-5, 9-11; Ps 84:9-10, 11-12, 13-14; 2 Pet 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8)

Chris Oliver

We have benefitted from Chris Oliver's notes on the Scripture Readings for many years now. Please pray for the soul of Marina Oliver, Chris' wife. Her funeral will take place at the church of St Anne, Nantwich at 11.30 am on Wednesday 20th December. May she rest in peace.

A letter from Bishop David for the 2nd Sunday of Advent 2023



In this second week of Advent, we will reflect for a moment on the theme of peace. Of course, when we look around our world today, during these Advent weeks, we see so much need for peace. We see peace needed in the wars that are taking place in the Ukraine and in the Holy Land. We see the need for peace in our communities, we recognise the need for peace within our families and perhaps we recognise too, the need for peace within ourselves as individuals.

As always, I would like to share with you a few words from the Advent scriptures. These are the words of the Prophet Isaiah used by the evangelist Luke to talk about the ministry of John, the son of Zechariah, the one who would be known as the Baptist.

“A voice cries in the wilderness. ‘Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight’. Every valley will be filled in, every mountain and hill will be made low, winding ways will be straightened and rough roads made smooth and all mankind will see the salvation of God”.

This is the peace that the Lord speaks of in his Word, it is a peace which begins when we are open and receptive to the Word of God,

to the power of God, His Kingdom at work in our lives, and it involves some hard works. The prophet puts it in those beautiful and familiar terms, about hills being laid low and about valleys being filled in.

Sometimes when I'm driving and see workmen on the motorway, it reminds me how challenging it is to keep that road straight that we use so often to get around the place. Then I look inside myself and I recognise that peace comes at a cost. Peace was won for us by our Lord's death on the cross and when we receive the grace of that cross into our lives, then we are at peace with almighty God.

So let's pray for peace in our world and let us recognise that the journey towards worldwide peace, comes with that step of peace within ourselves. When we respond to the invitation of God to become peacemakers, not least, and first of all, within ourselves.

Sincerely,

Bishop David Oakley, Bishop of Northampton. December 10, 2023

Pope Francis teaching us about prayer

From the moment of creation, God blesses all creatures that he has made (*Genesis 1:22 and 28*). To bless is to ‘speak goodness’ (*benedicere*) and mankind can equally bless (speak goodness) for others. When we pray for someone, we ‘speak goodness’ for that person.

This is in stark contrast to ‘speaking ill’ of others, which is forbidden by God. If we have nothing good to say of someone, it is better to say nothing at all! But it is even better that we should pray for those of whom we have nothing good to say.

It is God who is the source of all blessing, and by blessing he has taught us to bless. God's blessing springs from his love, and our love for others drives us to bless them in our prayer. Because it comes from love, it is not only when there is a specific need, such as illness that prompts us to offer this prayer of blessing; it is a daily prayer.

“The prayer of blessing is man's response to God's gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church §2626*).