



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

Spring is in the air!

“It is the coming in of a Second Spring;” (*St John Henry Newman, 13th July 1852 at St Mary’s College, Oscott, during the first Provincial Synod of Westminster.*)

In recent weeks we have referred to a number of people associated with what St John Henry Newman called the “second Spring”, the great re-birth of the Catholic Church in the British Isles in the late 19th century and early 20th. He spoke of the new Dioceses that were established: “Westminster and Nottingham, Beverley and Hexham, Northampton and Shrewsbury, if the world lasts, shall be names as musical to the ear, as stirring to the heart, as the glories we have lost; and Saints shall rise out of them, if God so will.”

Yet his words were not simply an ode of triumph. He spoke cautiously: “Have we any right to take it strange, if, in this English land, the spring-time of the Church should turn out to be an English spring, an uncertain, anxious time of hope and fear, of joy and suffering,—of bright promise and budding hopes, yet withal, of keen blasts, and cold showers, and sudden storms?”

The saint spoke prophetically, for although the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced an enormous expansion of the Church in this land, more recently icy winds have blown.

Newman began his homily with a text: “Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For the winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land.” (*Song of Solomon 2:10-12*)

As the first green appears in nature (La primavera — first green), so there is sign of new life in the Church. For too many years recently we have been seeing reduced numbers at Mass, fewer men offering themselves for service in the priesthood, religious orders declining and secularisation being on the ascendant.

However, many people have detected a change in the air. While sadly the decline is continuing in some places, there is new growth taking place in others. What seems to be happening is that in places where parishes have become outward-looking and evangelistic, God is blessing their efforts, while those places which are simply trying to maintain themselves are still declining.

There is a simple explanation for this: where parishes are obeying the command of Jesus to “Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News” (*Mark 16:15*), God is pouring out his blessings. On the other hand, where this is not happening, the blessings are not either.

The parables of the Talents (*Matthew 25:14-30*) and of the Pounds (*Luke 19:11-27*) help us to understand this. In both parables, it was the person who was only interested in keeping the gift safe, whether talent or pound, who was condemned. Those who sought to grow their gift were the ones who were blessed. Today it seems that where the Church is being defensive, she is declining. On the other hand, where the Church is evangelistic, she is growing.

There is no single formula for the method of evangelisation, but one which has borne fruit in many places comes from an influential book written by Fr James Mallon, a priest from the Diocese of Halifax in Nova Scotia, Canada, entitled “Divine Renovation”. However, this does not stand on its own — Sherry Weddell published “Forming Intentional Disciples” in 2012, Michael Dobb wrote “Relit” in 2013, and Fr Mallon’s book was published in 2014. These are all influential, but other initiatives were taking place at the same time, for example, the “Pastoral Center” in Oakland, California, which produces the “Growing Up Catholic” system of preparation for First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation which we are using. Another important aspect of the renewal taking place is the renewed recognition of the importance of the Scriptures, and the “Bible Timeline” courses are an example of this.

Most of these come from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, but one initiative which is home-grown is the Alpha course. Initially a Church of England initiative, it developed through the 1990s, and is now used in many Catholic churches all over the world. In its current form, it quotes Pope Francis and has contributions from many Catholic speakers including Cardinal Cantalamessa.

There seems to be a clear choice for the Church; we can continue to seek to manage decline, or we can embrace the task that Jesus has given us. It is hardly necessary to consider the different consequences of the two options — we **MUST** follow the command of Jesus. Bishop David has formed a Diocesan Mission team, and St Gregory’s will be involved in this.

Back in 1852 St John Henry Newman observed: “What is it that has happened in England just at this time? Something strange is passing over this land”. Indeed so; both then and now, and as in his day, so too in ours may we see the ‘New Green’ of Spring flowers become a glorious Summer for the Church.

Please note: until the end of restrictions, there will be an additional Sunday Mass at St Gregory’s at 12.00 noon.

Notices of Interest

Bible Alive for Easter & May is now available. The cost is £3.00. If you want to purchase a copy, they are near the hand-sanitiser in the narthex as you come into church.

Repository: If you wish to buy anything, please come to the Church between 9 and 10am & speak to a Steward who will show you what to do & where to go.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: Please note that you will need to phone Deacon Michael on 07999808997 before you attend, to book your place.

First Holy Communion 2021: The programme has started and is running through 'Loom', an on line platform used by many schools. Parents need to 'home-school' children. The programme is called "Growing Up Catholic", and there are 6 sessions preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, followed by six sessions preparing for First Holy Communion.

Confirmation: Yet again we are thrown into confusion! We await more information. This continues to be difficult!

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School is currently recruiting for a Breakfast Club Team Member and also a Lunchtime Supervisor (all details will be on the school website).

Vianney Mission Prayer Group will not meet during this time.

Bl. Cyprian Tansi Prayer Group continues to pray together online via Skype and by telephone.

Parish Finances: Thank you to everyone who has been so very generous during this lockdown. Our parish finances are reasonably stable. Your generosity is much appreciated!

Standing Order via Donor's Own Bank. You can set up a standing order for donations to your parish using either your on line bank account or in branch. The information required to make the donation is as follows:

Bank; NatWest
Sort Code; 60-06-11
Account Number; 46898093
Account Name; Northampton Roman Catholic Diocesan Trust
Payment Ref; Parish Name/Area: (St. Gregory's, Northampton)

The God Who Speaks - Our Liturgy of the Word Tuesday 13th April 2021 (7.30-8.30 pm) "From an Empty Tomb to the Ends of the Earth - The Pilgrimage from Easter to Pentecost: The Resurrection Appearances". One of a Series of Online Zoom Sessions exploring the upcoming Lectionary Readings and Seasons of the Liturgical Year. It is a valuable opportunity to develop our engagement with the Scriptures that we hear proclaimed at the Liturgy of the Word at Mass. Please register in advance to secure a place by e mail (admin@nores.org.uk) or phone: 01582 723312 (ext 1) Once your booking is received you will be sent details of how to join the online Zoom sessions.

Being a Dynamic Catholic: Through Lent there were regular talks which are on the parish website and Facebook page based on a book entitled "Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic" by Matthew Kelly. All these are still available on the parish website.

Financial Support for Self-Isolation: Please see the following article regarding financial help available for those who are self-isolating;

<https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/health/coronavirus/how-apply-self-isolation-financial-support-now-available-across-northamptonshire-3004756>

Masses and Covid security in Lockdown: It is of the greatest importance that the church is a place of safety from the COVID virus, & while clergy & stewards do all they can to have systems in place, there is a responsibility on everyone to adhere to government regulations & maintain the safety of **everyone** as well as themselves in church. While 'bubbles' & households may sit together, there should be at least 1 metre distance separating those not in the same 'bubble' or household & must wear masks. We are still allowed to come to Mass; this is in part because churches are safe places. It is up to us to keep the church safe.

Face masks: Wearing face masks is compulsory in churches & you should wear one if you can. Stewards are not responsible for policing this, but may remind you that this is the law.

Tots @St Gregory's: As with other meetings, Tots has been cancelled until further notice.

Track and Trace: The government have now released their app to support track & trace & we have a QR code which can be scanned to record your presence at church. This is not obligatory, but should help in the important task of controlling the spread of the virus. As responsible members of society, we should comply with this request.

Preaching in the Acts of the Apostles: There are eight speeches in Book of the Acts of the Apostles, five by Peter, three by Paul which are known as 'kerygmatic'. The format of each is fundamentally the same, and begins with reference to the Old Testament, explaining how the time of the Saviour was predicted and prophesied. This fulfilment is realised in the birth, life, teaching, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. Through the Resurrection of Jesus, a new age has dawned. In this Messianic Age, the Holy Spirit is given as a sign that Jesus is still with us. This Messianic Age will come to its completion with the return of Christ. Through repentance, Baptism and in the power of the Holy Spirit, new life, forgiveness and salvation are available to all.

This is known as "kerygmatic" preaching, and lies at the heart of the Gospel message. Indeed, the four Gospels can be understood as (rather long) kerygmatic sermons.

This is still the fundamental teaching of the Gospel, and recently the Church has produced a new "Directory for Catechesis", which really emphasises the importance of starting with the basic kerygma — the fundamental message of these eight speeches in the Acts of the Apostles. Today we can become bogged down in the more detailed teaching of the Church, all of which is good and true, but is founded on the essential truths of the kerygma.

This is the foundation on which all Christian teaching is based; it is the primary teaching of the Apostles, it is what forms the substance of the Baptismal Creed which we re-affirmed at Easter, and it is also the message of the Alpha course.

On this foundation the edifice of Catholic teaching stands secure, which is why it is there that we must start. During Eastertide our weekday and Sunday first readings are from the Acts of the Apostles; this is a good time of the year to be reminded of this fundamental truth.

Various Local Elections on May 6th 2021

It would be inappropriate in this newsletter to encourage voting for one or another particular party, and indeed a good case can be made for **not** voting for political parties in local elections. However, it is the lowest level of democracy, and we should use our vote. We should not vote for the candidate for any particular party without examining whether, first, that candidate can be trusted, and secondly, what is that candidate offering to do for the community. If the

candidate has previously held office, it is possible to make a judgement about their reliability to deliver on their manifesto. Important questions are: How will the most vulnerable be protected; the elderly, the children, the unemployed, the homeless, the disabled, the sick? Will sustainable policies be followed, climate change be taken seriously? Is there a vision for a better Northampton? Is that vision actually better, and better for whom?

Scripture Readings 11th April 2021, 2nd Sunday of Easter, Year B

During the six weeks of Easter the first readings are from the Book of Acts, in which Luke describes Jesus continuing his ministry through the Church after his earthly life ended. Not intimidated by his arrest, Peter continued to attract many Jews to follow Jesus. Today we hear how this growing community held their assets in common. The next verses give two examples: Barnabas who gave the proceeds from selling a field; and Ananias and his wife, who held back some of the proceeds and were struck dead by Peter in his Apostolic role as a Judge of Israel.

The dramatic Passover Psalm from Easter Sunday is repeated today more fully, thanking God for repeatedly coming to our rescue and saving us.

The second readings in Eastertide are from the first letter of John, whose gospel said little about Jesus' humanity and his moral teachings. Some members of John's community needed to be reminded that our faith is in a man, Jesus, who is Son of God, God's Christ. Loving God means keeping his commandments.

The gospel reading is the beautiful first ending of John's gospel, after Thomas, in the highest expression of faith in any of the gospels, acclaims Jesus as "My Lord and my God".

Psalm Response: **Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, for His love has no end.**

(Acts 4: 32-35; Psalm: 117(118); 1 John 5: 1-6; John 20: 19-31)

Chris Oliver

A Really Big 'Thank-you'

First, personally, from Fr Andrew. Thank you for your loving support over the past year, offered in so many different ways. In spite of lockdown and the restrictions on our parish activity, there has always been plenty to do, and many people have generously offered their time and skills, not only to maintain the parish, but to develop our ministry in new ways during the pandemic. The parish is not, and cannot be a 'one-man-band', and the active support of so many people is essential.

Thank you for your personal generosity, not least through the Easter Offering and many other ways in which you have shown your generosity, both recently and over the past year. Thank you, too to the people who have followed the recordings of Mass and the 'Lent Thoughts' each day, and particularly to those who have expressed their appreciation. It is always encouraging when people show that effort is appreciated!

Thank you to the many people who have made the celebration of Easter in the parish beautiful and memorable; for the flowers and decorations, for the cleaning and polishing, and this year, in particular, to the stewards without whose work we would have been unable to be open at all. This year the restrictions have prevented the full liturgies but many thanks to all who have participated; server (just one!), readers, musicians, singers (wonderful to hear singing again) and faithful cleaners who have complied with the requirements to sanitise the church after every Mass. It is a tribute to them and the stewards that we have not had a single case reported through the test and trace forms.

As we end the financial year, the parish is in a sound position thanks to your ongoing generosity, and new envelopes will be issued in the next two weeks. St Gregory's is a wonderful parish; a clear sign of the goodness of God and of his blessings on his people.

Kitchen Makeover

Those who have ventured into the hall this week will have seen that we have acquired a number of professional kitchen work-surfaces and storage racks.

An important part of the normal Alpha' evening is the shared meal, and in past courses we have enjoyed some excellent cuisine, but the kitchen facilities are only just up to the necessary standard. The cookery team had been looking at the possibility of upgrading the kitchen before lockdown, and (sadly) the pandemic has resulted in some places closing. One such is the residential youth centre of the Archdiocese of Southwark in Whitstable, and we have been given some of their kitchen furniture.

It will be good to up-grade our hall kitchen to modern standards; it will improve our hygiene rating (not that we would fail now!) and make catering simpler.

One of the first tasks will be to replace the flooring which is cracked near the door. This needs to be done by a professional, but before that can happen, the old units will need to be removed. Volunteer labour will be gratefully received in due course. Cliff Snelling will project-manage the operation, and specific requests for help will come from time to time. We plan to complete this during the time that the hall remains closed due to the restrictions, and have it ready for when we can re-open for our normal use.

Narthex revamp



The map which has been in the narthex for many years was intended to be a reminder of the global nature of the Church, and that we have people at St Gregory's whose original home was far away from here. The plan is that on the boards either side of the door will be the message "Welcome" in the language of every place represented here. You may be asked to help!



Why Alpha: Pope Francis has asked that every parish and every Catholic have a missionary heart. In 2019, over 5,600 Catholic parishes and organisations around the world ran Alpha with an estimated 310,000 participants.

"What I like in all that I have seen and heard about Alpha is the simplicity. For me, the Christian life has something to do with simplicity, friendship, closeness and joy. That's what I feel about Alpha and I think that's a sign that it works and that it's given from the Lord."

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn Archbishop of Vienna — Austria



SECOND COLLECTIONS 2021

28th February	CAFOD (Lenten Fast Day 26th Feb)
2nd April	Good Friday Collection for the Holy Places
25th April	Diocesan Priests' Training Fund
16th May	Mass Media
20th June	Day for Life
27th June	Peter's Pence
11th July	Apostleship of the Sea
19th September	Home Mission Sunday
3rd October	CAFOD (Harvest Fast Day 1st October)
24th October	Mission Sunday
7th November	Bishop's Maintenance Fund
14th November	Sick & Retired Priests' Fund

