



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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Thank you to Fr Nicholas and Fr Tony

Many will know that Fr Andrew has been on a journey through the Accident and Emergency department of Northampton General Hospital and emergency surgery during the last week. Here is a short account in his own words.

I place the beginning of my journey to Saturday 3rd December at the retreat afternoon given by Fr Rajan Fausto, who spoke of fear as the opposite of faith. If we have faith in God, we have no cause to fear. Using many passages from the Bible, he emphasised that fear is a sign of imperfect faith.

I will confess that I am inclined to use the word fear more loosely than I think he does. If I have left it late to get somewhere, I may ‘fear that I will be late’. This use of the word ‘fear’ is more a confession of lack of organisation than lack of faith in God. If I have been disorganised, I cannot reasonably expect God to teleport me to my destination.

However, the memory of his words was to be significant in the experience that lay ahead.

I am very fond of organ recitals, but do not propose to subject you to a recital of my personal organs, but this does remind me of the book in which are recorded the names of all those who made donations to our organ fund when we installed the present instrument. My first thought was to entitle the book as a ‘Register of Organ Donors’ until I realised that this would probably be misunderstood.

At a priests’ meeting a few days ago I had had a conversation with another priest expressing concern (not fear!) about those who live on their own should they be taken ill in the middle of the night. I was thankful that at 3.00 am I was able to ask Carole to take me to the hospital. There has been a lot of cover in the news media about the strain in A&E departments, and long waits for treatment, so I will record, as best as I can remember, how long I was kept waiting.

I was booked in at 3.20 am, and by 4.00 I was in a cubicle and being seen by two doctors from the surgical team, who agreed that I needed emergency surgery which would be the same day. Unfortunately, they then had to ask me to return to the waiting area as the cubicle was needed for incoming patients. This area was very crowded; in fact as time went by more and more people arrived, some of them not very co-operative with the hard-pressed staff who managed to deal with everyone with politeness and dignity.

At about 7.30 I was taken by wheel-chair to another part of A&E to be seen by the consultant who agreed with the earlier conclusion, then sent me back to ‘FIT STOP’. I have been unable to work out the meaning of that designation. Most of the morning was spent in waiting, with a trip to X ray to break up the time, and then, after a Covid test was admitted to a ward.

However, one important event before that was a very welcome and important visit from Fr Mark Floody, and I was able to make my confession and receive the Sacrament of the Sick. This was not because of fear that I might not survive the operation, but because I knew that I needed all God’s healing power. I have seen so many times the power of the Sacrament of the Sick when I have anointed people.

I had joked with the porter who had pushed me to X ray that it was not a long way, but the ward to which I was admitted was much further, and it was the same porter who took me there. As with all the staff that I met in the hospital, in spite of the pressure that they were clearly under, they maintained a good humour and were helpful and efficient.

I was made welcome on the ward, and told that I would be taken for surgery later in the day. The clock continued to tick on, but no sign of anyone to take me away, and as it got past 5.00 I was concerned that the surgeons might be coming to the end of their day. I was conscious that it was before 8.00 that the consultant had said that it would be the same day, but if he had been operating for 9 hours, he might be a little tired, and maybe less careful. I need not have worried, but just had faith!

It was at about 5.30 that I was wheeled in my bed to the operating theatre. It was Fr Rajan’s words that were in my head as we made the journey to the theatre, and I was completely confident in God’s care for me.

I was introduced to the surgeon, anaesthetists, and theatre staff. I was asked what I did, and when I said that I was a priest, the theatre sister said “Father Andrew! I didn’t recognise you.” I did not think quickly enough to make the obvious reply that she had never seen me without my clothes on before.

The anaesthetists promised to stay awake and keep me asleep, which they did, and the next thing I knew it was 1.30 in the morning, when I was woken up to be given an injection, and then returned to sleep until about 5.00 when the ward began to wake up and things started to happen.

I have seen pictures of the earliest operating theatres, and understand why they are called ‘theatres’. They used to be built like small sports arenas, presumably so that students could learn the art or surgery — not, I think, so that general spectators could watch, although I suppose they could have sold tickets to help pay for the service.

I have heard it said that the NHS is the nearest thing we have to a national religion. While I place my faith in God, I am thankful to the kind and skilled people who cared for me in hospital, and thank God for their devotion, kindness and skill. Thank you, too, for your prayers for me at this time.

Fr Andrew hopes to be back functioning this week, but will be at somewhat reduced level of activity.

Notices of Interest

Bible Alive for December is now available - only £3.00! If you wish to purchase a copy, they are near the hand-sanitiser in the narthex as you come into church.

Repository: The Repository is open after every Sunday Mass – Catholic Diaries for 2023 are now available, as are Christmas cards and mementos! We need more helpers prepared to stand for a few minutes after Mass – all stock is marked, so an easy task! *Contact Kath.healey.789@ gmail.com*

Thursday Holy Hour & Adoration: As a trial, Holy Hour will be Holy Two Hours, from 9am until 11am. This can only continue if there are sufficient numbers to sustain it. No one is expected to remain for the entire two hours, come for as long as you can or want to.

Window Decorations: The trays for window decorations are available in the foyer after each Mass on Sunday; anyone who would like to do a window is welcome to collect a tray. Please bring the completed tray back to church any time before Friday 23rd December. If you want to put it up in a window, please feel free: the trays need wiring to the hooks in each window. Please do not use candles as part of the arrangement as they cannot be lit for safety reasons.

Advent Retreat 2: Saturday 10th December, St Gregory's Church. Mass at 9am & ends at 4pm. Please bring packed lunch. "The New & Perpetual Pentecost, the coming era of peace. A new springtime for the Church". Derek Williams, catholic lay evangelist, will give a retreat on the gift of living in the Divine Will, a new dawn for the Church. All are welcome.

Food Parcels: Please contact Gregory Care (07434669011) if you or anyone you know would benefit from receiving a food parcel.

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!

Save the Date: Saturday 18th March 2023 Encounter Northampton, a day hosted by Mission Northampton in St Gregory's Hall from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. More details later!

Church Heating: The Church heating has to be on for two hours before it even begins to warm up, so not running it for weekday Mass is a way of making a considerable saving. Please come in warm clothing! We will heat the church and hall on Sundays, but the extra cost of this will be more than the saving on weekdays.

A course on the Psalms: It is sub-titled "The School of Prayer", with the invitation to 'learn to pray like Christ'. Continues.

December 17th, NYMO are hosting an extended Young Adults Brunch, with Adoration, Faith Formation, Food, Fellowship, Mass, & 2 amazing guest speakers, Joanna Bogle, & from the US, Meg Hunter-Kilmer. (Bring a Bible with you!) We invite you to join us for this free event, 10am with Adoration, at Our Lady Help of Christians, Luton. For full details, please see nymo.org/brunch. Age 18-35

The God who Speaks: The 'Year of the Word' continues and the Diocesan Bible Study sessions for the Sunday Mass readings are continuing. In January there will be an introduction to the Year of Matthew (Year A in the lectionary)

Missio Donors/ Red Box holders: Calendars for 2023 are free to supporters & are available now: visit table beside the confessionals. New supporters of Missio to help spread the missionary work of the Church are always welcome and needed. For further information speak to the clergy or Dorothy (9:00 Mass) or Alec (11:00 Mass).

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be on Monday 16th Jan 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: Important Dates for First Communion Families: Congratulations to all children who have enrolled on the First Holy Communion programme. You will now have all the dates of sessions. Please try to attend them all, and please enjoy the course!

Confirmation in 2023: Those interested in Confirmation preparation are asked to meet Helen after the 9.00 Mass this Sunday.

Flowers for Christmas: The usual envelopes for donations for Christmas flowers will be available from this week

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

Choir Matters: I have cancelled Christmas...practices, as we are now as fully prepared as we can be in the circumstances. *Alec*

Memorial Mass: On Sat. 17th December, 11am, there will be a Celebratory Mass for Philip Ndekwe RIP. All welcome.

Tots @ St Gregory's: We have re-started: tots and their carers welcome, 9.30-11.30 on Tuesdays during term-time £1 per adult!!

St Gregory's Brownies: St Gregory's has a Brownie Unit who meet in the hall on Wednesday evenings. We have some spaces due to some of our girls going up to Guides and would love to meet some new prospective Brownies. We are all aged between 7 and 10 years. Please get in touch with the leaders on tw.lewis@ntlworld.com for more information or a little chat.

Flame 2023: The theme of Flame 2023 – which is exactly 150 days before World Youth Day in Lisbon – takes the WYD Scripture "Mary arose & went with haste" and crystallises it into the theme, "Rise Up!" Rise up after the pandemic, Rise up as young Catholics, Rise up – as Mary did – for the surprising and beautiful adventure that is our Catholic faith. **Sat 4th March 23 - book the date - more details soon**

Parish Finances: Much the easiest way to support the parish financially is through a standing order directly from your own bank account. The information required for this 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)**

Refreshment Donations: Thank you for your generous donations to the Bible Society which amounted to £127.04. All donations given now from after Sunday Mass will be given to the Hope Centre, and added to offerings made at the crib.

Prayers for Ukraine: Please continue to pray for an end to the war in Ukraine:

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

Scripture Readings 11th December 2019, 3rd Sunday of Advent, Year A

To encourage and console all whose confidence in God falters, Isaiah continues his triumphal vision of the peace that will come from God, when those ransomed by the Lord will go to Zion, singing God's praises. It was written in Babylon shortly after 540 BC, when the Persian king Cyrus had unexpectedly authorised Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem. Isaiah's portrayal of the people's expectant joy was later seen by Christians as a foretaste of the peace Jesus Christ will bring.

The psalm praises the goodness of God who keeps his covenant promises.

The letter attributed to James, probably the brother of the Lord, the leader of the Jerusalem Church, was written late in the first century. It is full of pastoral advice and warnings against riches and presumption. Religion is not a private matter – the Christian community is in a covenant relationship with God, and our faith

in God must be visible in love of our neighbour. We must patiently practise our faith, not swearing but letting our "yes" mean "yes", leaving justice to God.

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus fulfils Isaiah's vision – he is already enabling the blind to see, the lame to walk – his kingdom is already coming into being. But this deputation from John the Baptist in prison introduces two chapters describing growing opposition to Jesus by the Jewish leaders.

Psalm Response: **Come, Lord, and save us.**

(Isaiah 35:1-6,10; Psalm 145(146); James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11)

Chris Oliver

Looking Forward

The effects of Alpha can be hard to quantify. Sometimes there are obvious and dramatic changes in people's lives; more often seeds are sown which may take a long time to germinate. It has been said that the most important sign of a good Alpha is laughter. Sometimes people are meeting practicing Christians for the first time, and over the meal-time conversations, discover that the popular caricature image of the Christian is far from the truth.

Alpha will run again next year. Many people prefer not to go out in dark evenings, and consideration will be given to this in determining the dates for future courses.

Alpha has proved itself to be a powerful means of engaging in Mission, and it utilises many different skills. With a large enough team, no one need attend every session, although a degree of continuity is desirable as part of the way it works is that good relationships are built up between the attendees, whether guest or team members.

Anyone interested in finding out more about this, please speak to Daniel Davighi, Rayner Wilnecker or Fr Andrew.

First session:	September 20th 2022:	Is there more to life than this?
Second Session:	September 27th 2022:	Who is Jesus?
Third Session:	October 4th 2022:	Why did Jesus die?
Fourth Session:	October 11th 2022:	How can I have faith?
Fifth Session:	October 18th 2022:	Why and how do I pray?
Sixth Session:	October 25th 2022:	Why and how should I read the Bible?
Seventh Session:	November 8th 2022:	How does God guide us?
Away-Day:	November 11th - 12th:	Who is the Holy Spirit? What does the Holy Spirit do? How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? How can I make the most of the rest of my life?
Eighth Session:	November 15th 2022:	How can I resist evil?
Ninth Session:	November 22nd 2022:	Why and how should I tell others?
Tenth Session:	November 29th 2022:	Does God heal today?
Eleventh Session:	December 6th 2022:	What about the Church?

'Twas the night before Christmas

The Mass for children on Christmas Eve has long been one of the most popular parts of St Gregory's celebration, and children are being rehearsed for their parts in that Mass. Some say that Christmas is for children, but the truth is that we are all children at heart, and the joy of Christmas is for everyone. We have a good number of children in the First Holy Communion preparation group, and a good number attend Children's Liturgy each week. Many thanks to all who are helping in this. Please note that anyone interested in Confirmation should see Helen after the 9.00 Mass today.

Christmas Gifts for the person who doesn't need more!

CAFOD World Gifts

World Gifts are a range of virtual charity gifts that will delight the people you give them to and help transform the lives of families living in poverty. Ranging in price from under £10 to £4,000, you can buy a queen bee for £4, or a vegetable garden for £5; for £10 you can teach someone to read. <https://worldgifts.cafod.org.uk/>

Cathedral Foodstore

Christmas Gift cards are available, priced at either £5 or £10, suitable gifts for those for whom you cannot think what to buy. The

money helps to buy food for the Cathedral Foodstore, the card is your gift.

Cards can be bought after Sunday Mass or from the parish office on Mondays, Wednesdays or Fridays

Gregory Care Toiletries

Your gifts of toiletries to Gregory Care are an important part of the support given by the Cathedral Foodstore to needy families. Thank you for your continued generosity

Hope Centre Food

Continued thanks for your regular generosity to the Hope Centre. From this Sunday and

until the end of Christmastide your donations for refreshments in the hall are given to the Hope Centre, along with the offerings at the crib

Caritas 'Love Christmas'

Caritas Northampton are collecting toys, books, games, puzzles, chocolates to luxury biscuits, slippers, socks, gloves and scarves, perfumes and aftershaves, makeup and jewellery, colouring books and baby gifts which are distributed throughout the diocese as Christmas gifts to needy families. <https://northamptondiocese.org/lovechristmas/>