



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 Proclamation of Jesus

Pope Francis has been giving a series of talks at his Wednesday General Audiences on Evangelisation. In last week's newsletter we looked at the teaching given on 18th January, which was on Jesus' way of proclamation; always from a pastoral heart. The Pope has been clear each week to demonstrate the difference between conversion by attraction and conversion by argument.

This week we focus on the teaching given on 25th January, which Pope Francis entitles “Jesus, Teacher of Proclamation”. Each week he uses a Gospel passage to help us to understand better, and this week he takes us to the synagogue in Nazareth, as we read in Luke.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:16-21)

Pope Francis draws out five essential elements from this. The first is joy. “Jesus proclaims, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; [...] He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor” (v. 18), that is, a proclamation of gladness, of joy. Good news: one cannot speak of Jesus without joy, because faith is a wonderful love story to be shared.”

This joy must be in the heart of anyone who seeks to proclaim the truth of Jesus. It is important to recognise the deep nature of Christian joy; it is expressed not simply in words or in a silly grin, even in times of sorrow - times which we all go through - that joy remains and shines out. It comes from having received a gift so great that no words can express the joy it brings. “A sad Christian can talk about beautiful things, but it is all in vain if the news he conveys is not joyful. A thinker once said, “A Christian who is sad is a sad Christian.” Don't forget this.

The second aspect is deliverance: “He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives”. The one who proclaims liberty is offering freedom, not seeking to impose burdens of the hearer. Pope Francis uses this as a demonstration of the contrast between evangelisation and proselytisation; the evangelist is proclaiming liberty to captives, not to make captives. There is a telling sentence: “the one who proclaims God cannot pressure others, but relieve them: not impose burdens, but take them away; bearing peace, not bearing guilt.”

A beautiful analogy is offered by Pope Francis: “Of course, following Jesus involves asceticism, involves sacrifices; after all, if every good thing requires these things, how much more the decisive reality of life! However, those who witness to Christ show the beauty of the goal rather than the toil of the journey. We may have happened to tell someone about a beautiful trip we took: for example, we would have spoken about the beauty of the places, what we saw and experienced, not about the time to get there and the queues at the airport, no! So, any announcement worthy of the Redeemer must communicate liberation. Like that of Jesus. Today there is joy, because I have come to liberate.”

The third aspect of the first proclamation of Jesus is light. He comes to bring “sight to the blind”. It is striking that throughout the Bible, before Christ, the healing of a blind man never appears, never. It was indeed a promised sign that would come with the Messiah. (see John 9:32) But, as with all Jesus' healing miracles, there is a deeper meaning. It is not just about **what** is seen, but **how** it is seen. We live in the light of the Lord, and in his light we see with the eyes of his love. Yet that other artificial light shines all around us. It is the light of the advertisement hoarding, the ‘bright lights’ that are snares and delusions which seek to lead us away from the true light. Many are blinded by those lights of artifice, showing us illusions and phantasies while hiding truth and real beauty.

The fourth aspect is related to the second. We have seen that deliverance is a leading into freedom, but it is also a deliverance from slavery. This slavery can take many shapes and forms, but come under the general heading of ‘evil’. That evil may be self-inflicted (sin) or come from outside ourselves in some way, but in either case, Jesus is one who can bring healing and forgiveness, and this is a vital part of his proclamation

The fifth aspect that Pope Francis draws out is the proclamation of the ‘Year of the Lord's Favour’. This was not a scheduled jubilee — this is a new age, the age of Jubilee! A different time, the Year of the Lord, and ‘Anno Domini’, in which all years will be from then on. There is no longer a ‘BC’, we are all in the New Era of Apostolic Discipleship!

Pope Francis finally wants us not to forget that the Good News is for the poor “We often forget about them, yet they are the recipients explicitly mentioned, because they are God's beloved. Let us remember them, and let us remember that, in order to welcome the Lord, each of us must make him- or herself “poor within”. . . “What is the shortest way to encounter Jesus?” Be needy. Be needy for grace, needy for forgiveness, be needy for joy. And He will draw near to you.”

This is Jesus' first recorded homily, consisting of just one sentence. If only all homilies could say so much in so few words!

All quotations, unless otherwise credited are from Pope Francis' general audience teaching on January 25th 2023
<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2023/documents/20230125-udienza-generale.html>

Notices of Interest

Bible Alive for February 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 wherever possible! We also 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. PS: There are still some Church Art Calendars and Diaries available.

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.

Car Park: Once again, may I remind car park users to be more considerate of others & **NOT** block the entrance/exit at any time. To do so makes things very difficult for other users and could be dangerous. If there are no places available, please use nearby roadside spaces.
Thank you. *Caryll*.
N.B. On Wednesday & Friday there were, again, cars blocking others from leaving. Please be more considerate when using the car park.

Fire Safety – Important notice. Some years ago in response to instructions relating to the fire risk associated with votive candles, we had trays made to go under the racks where the candles burned to prevent the possibility of a naked flame falling on unlit candles below. There have been instances of serious fires beginning in this way. Unlit candles **MUST NOT** be placed on these trays in any circumstances. This has been happening in recent weeks, but it does represent a major fire risk, and must not continue. Please will everyone be observant about this.

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**

CAFOD Syria-Turkey Earthquake Appeal: CAFOD is responding with support of provision of food, water, shelter, medical assistance and winter kits for survivors. Your donations in recent months have made that quick response possible. Let us join CAFOD in praying for our sisters and brothers affected by the earthquakes and the winter weather. Your support for CAFOD throughout the year allows our Catholic agency to act quickly when disasters strike. For more details visit CAFOD’s Syria Turkey Emergency Appeal online at <https://cafod.org.uk/give>.

Hope Centre: The Hope Centre’s cupboards are quite bare at the moment and they would so much appreciate it if people could kindly donate a little extra, or just as much as they can, to fill the shelves again! Many thanks.

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

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.

Join Friends of the Holy Land for an unforgettable evening of uplifting music on Thursday 16th February in Westminster Cathedral at a concert featuring the London Welsh Male Voice Choir supported by The Priests. The London Welsh Male Voice Choir has recorded with Charlotte Church, Aled Jones and Bryn Terfel. The Priests are three Roman Catholic priests from Northern Ireland who scooped the **Guinness World Record** for “Fastest-selling UK debut for a classical act” with their first album. The concert starts at 7:30 pm and tickets starting at £20 are available now through Eventbrite at - <http://bit.ly/3i0ath2> or search *LWMVC Concert at Westminster Cathedral*, or by calling the office – 01926 512980.
www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/westminster-concert2023

Refreshment Donations: Until the beginning of Lent, refreshment donations are given to Gregory Care which supports those in material need in our own parish, but also operates the toiletry collections for the Cathedral Foodstore. The total of donations to the Hope Centre has been magnificent, and will provide significant help for the homeless of our town.

Encounter - Saturday 25th March 2023 Encounter enables participants to deepen their relationship with God as well as discovering a renewed desire to share their faith with others. This will take place at St Gregory’s Church Hall. Please contact Maria Heath: Maria.mission@northamptondiocese.org

Food Parcels: Please contact Gregory Care (01604 713015) if you or anyone you know would benefit from receiving a food parcel.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be on Monday 13th Feb 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: 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 should have spoken to Helen and will know the plan for the coming months.

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)**

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

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 12th February 2023, 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Writing about 132 BC, Ben Sira was a learned and widely travelled Jerusalem scholar. Today's reading is one of the clearest statements in the whole Bible on free will. God created human beings and – as an essential part of our nature – gave us the ability to choose between right and wrong, life or death. God notes our actions, but “gives no one permission to sin”.

The psalm praises God's law, which should be followed because it is designed to help us become who we are meant to be.

After saying he did not come using clever human oratory, Paul now tells the Corinthians something no human being could work out, namely God's wisdom – his plan from the beginning for our salvation. Because this knowledge comes to us only by revelation, we must be open and listen to the Spirit who reveals it.

Continuing the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus states clearly that He is not abolishing the Jewish Law. But He then goes on to clarify the Commandments – we must obey them in spirit, not just a literal minimum. Our free will should be exercised with wisdom, so that we help to build the kingdom of God here on earth.

(Matthew 5:32 is usually understood to refer to marrying within forbidden degrees of kindred.)

Psalm Response: **They are happy who follow God's law!**

(Sirach/ Ecclesiasticus 15:15-20; Psalm 118(119); 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; Matthew 5:17-37)

Chris Oliver

GREGORY CARE

Thank you all for your generous support over the past few months. Your support has been amazing and has enabled us to provide gifts to several families over Christmas as well as providing clothes, toys and household items to families in need. We have recently committed to working with local churches to support Ukrainian families staying at the Westone Hotel. As we have no storage facilities we cannot accept general donations but please lookout for specific items we may be asking for.

Gregory Care is a very small dedicated team of volunteers who would welcome more volunteers with new skills, ideas and time. If you would like to hear more about Gregory Care please speak to Carole or Catherine.

TOILETRIES

Two years on and your support providing toiletries for the Cathedral Foodstore continues to grow in line with demand. Your generosity is not only appreciated by the recipients but has also been noted by Foodstore volunteers, local councillors and other supporters of the Foodstore. St Gregory's was ahead of the game in recognising the negative impact of hygiene poverty. Your weekly contributions are helping to improve the mental and physical health of local people in need. As a parish we should be proud of what we are continuing to achieve. We hope some of you may have seen the write up in the Chronicle and Echo - 'The reality of a typical Thursday morning Foodbank session' (9th January)

<https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/news/people/the-reality-of-a-typical-thursday-morning-foodbank-session-in-northampton-in-january-a-volunteers-view-3979701>

Alpha beginning on March 14th 2023

Four weeks to go! What do YOU think? Do I get involved? Many have been on an Alpha Course and say how much they enjoyed the evenings; many of them come back for a second time.

Help is needed in preparing the hall in the afternoon, in the catering team and in the washing-up team, but most of all, help is needed in advertising the course and in bringing friends, and in coming yourself!

First session:	March 14th 2023:	Is there more to life than this?
Second Session:	March 21st 2023:	Who is Jesus?
Third Session:	March 28th 2023	Why did Jesus die?
Fourth Session:	April 18th 2023:	How can I have faith?
Fifth Session:	April 25th 2023:	Why and how do I pray?
Sixth Session:	May 2nd 2023:	Why and how should I read the Bible?
Seventh Session:	May 9th 2023:	How does God guide us?
Away-Day:	May 12th/13th 2023	Who is the Holy Spirit?
Eighth Session:	May 16th 2023:	How can I resist evil?
Ninth Session:	May 23rd 2023:	Why and how should I tell others?
Tenth Session:	June 6th 2023:	Does God heal today?
Eleventh Session:	June 13th 2023:	What about the Church?

What does the Church teach about Horoscopes?

It is said that the first place many people look in a newspaper is the horoscope section. Some see it as 'harmless fun', for others it provides a word of comfort, hope or challenge for the coming day. There are also those who take horoscopes a great deal more seriously, and some who will get Tarot readings and believe what they are told. Others will use Tarot as a side-show at a fete – sadly, even one run by a church.

The Catholic Church is clear about this:

All forms of *divination* are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to “unveil” the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate

hidden powers. They contradict the honour, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church §2116)

The Church invites us to make daily prayer, and it is in our morning prayer that we will find the gentle, loving words which will sometimes challenge us and guide us through the coming day. The best resource we have is the Bible itself, but finding our way through the whole Bible is hard without a guide. 'Bible Alive' is excellent in this, and available each month in the Narthex. There are many resources on line; one of the best is 'Sacred Space' [<https://www.sacredspace.ie/daily-prayer>], 'Universalis' and 'Laudate' are both apps for mobile phones or tablets and are great for daily prayer. Users of horoscopes may feel that this does them no harm; prayer must be a better source of the knowledge of the will of God for us day by day.