



# The Catholic Parish of Saint Gregory the Great Northampton



PART OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF NORTHAMPTON, REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 234091



**“A truly thriving Catholic community,  
confidently and humbly proclaiming the  
Good News of Jesus Christ.”**

## The Return from Exile: First task

It has seemed very much like an exile from the church in the last three months, but now, step by step, we have begun to return. There are striking parallels with the return from exile in Babylon of the Jewish people.

In the book of Daniel we read of the fall of the Babylonian Empire to that of the Medes and Persians (*Daniel chapter 5*). Nebuchadnezzar, who had deported the exiles from Jerusalem died in 562 BC, after which the Babylonian Empire began to crumble (as was predicted in the interpretation of the dream (*Daniel 2:24-45*)). Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by Evil-Merodach (see *2 Kings 25:27*), and then a further succession of rulers until Belshazzar, and finally in 539, Cyrus of Persia invades and takes control of Babylon.



The ‘Cyrus Cylinder’, now in the British Museum records his conquest of Babylon and how he allowed all who were held in exile there to return to their homelands and financed the rebuilding of their cities, including the exiles from Jerusalem, as recorded in the book of Ezra (*inaccurately quoted in Ezra 1:2-4*).

The return to Jerusalem was not accomplished immediately, and appears to have been in three waves. The first began in 537. Led by Sheshbazzar, they followed the same route that Abraham had taken centuries earlier on his way to the promised land, and this journey would have been made with that in mind. They also were carrying the Temple treasures that Nebuchadnezzar had plundered and had been returned by Cyrus — there is a relief sculpture of this in Persepolis in modern Iran. This would have recalled the return from Egypt after their years of slavery there, when they had plundered the wealth of the Egyptians.

Their first task was the rebuilding of the Temple, and re-establishing of worship. This is the message of the prophet Haggai.

This was not accomplished without difficulty, although the people were willing and generous. “As soon as they came to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, some of the heads of families made free-will offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site” (*Ezra 2:68*)

In relation to our return to the church, many people have shown great generosity. Many have made financial gifts over and above their regular giving to the Church. Many have given up a great deal of time to help with stewarding while the restrictions continue, and many have come to pray, which is, after all, what the church is for.

The difficulties that the returnees had was to do with their relationship with the Samaritans. We know, from the Gospels that this was strained in the time of Jesus, and the origins of this go back to the era of the return from exile.

Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom when it split from Judah after the death of Solomon. The prophets of the Northern Kingdom; Elijah, Elisha, Amos and Hosea tell us of the behavior of the kings and people of the North, and how they offended God. They warn that this will lead to disaster, as indeed it does when Assyria invades Israel, and thereafter there is a sort of amalgamation of pagan worship with a watered down remembrance of the worship of the true God. These people became the Samaritans.

When the Babylonian exiles returned, the Samaritans offered to help them in rebuilding the Temple. (*Ezra 4:1-2*) However this offer was rejected, and thereafter there was conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans.

We need to learn from this. In the Gospels, we find that Jesus himself had a better relationship with Samaritans; indeed one of his best-known parables has a Samaritan as the hero. At the end of his ministry, Jesus specifically lists Samaria as a place to be evangelized (*Acts 1:8*). We read the Old Testament in the light of the New.

Worship comes first. We have returned to our church, first for private prayer, and now for the offering of Mass. We did not need to rebuild the physical structure of the church, but we remember that St Peter tells us that we are “living stones” (*1 Peter 2:4-10*), and it is as a worshipping community that we need to be rebuilt.

In a physical building, the bricks and stones cannot be ‘socially distanced’; they must be in close proximity, and bound together with mortar. We are bound together in the love of God, and ‘social distancing’ is un-natural for us. There is an uneasy pause at Mass after the greeting: “The peace of the Lord be with you always”; we know that something should follow this, and we miss greeting one another at this point. We can learn what is the true value and significance of the Rite of Peace and grow together in love.

We remember too that there are many who are shielding or vulnerable and unable to be at Mass; the camera recording the Mass is for their benefit. May we all be rebuilt into God’s living temple.

Next week: the second task.



# Notices of Interest

**Confession:** Confession will be available between 11.00 am and 2.00 pm daily, but please email first to arrange a time to ensure that Fr Andrew is free.

**Supporting CAFOD and the Hope Centre:** Please see the respective websites to make donations for CAFOD and / or the Hope Centre:  
<https://cafod.org.uk/>  
<https://northamptonhopecentre.org.uk/get-involved/donate/>

**The Office:** Now that the Church is finally allowed to open, I am happy to see people during office hours. However, I must ask you to stay at the office doorway so that social distancing can be maintained. Thank you. Caryll

**Bible Alive** for July & August 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. Please help yourself to a copy of The Crusader.

**For Parents and Teachers.** Last week, CAFOD launched a National Assembly for schools. This amazing assembly can be used both in the school setting for collective worship, as well as at home. It is all about CAFOD's 'Summer of Hope' and informs, inspires and encourages children, at a time when children may really need it. It is led by passionate youths and is a real must-watch!  
<https://cafod.org.uk/News/Events/Summer-hope-assembly>

**CAFOD Corona Virus online petition:** Unite against the Corona Virus. We are living through the biggest Public Health Crisis in a century. Right across the UK it has been having a devastating impact on all our lives. Many people have lost loved ones. This is not a time for divisions. The world should unite in love & compassion. Out of love for our brothers & sisters please sign the online petition to our Prime Minister asking him to ensure the most vulnerable people are a priority in the UKs international efforts as well as at home. Visit <https://e-activist.com/page/59334/petition/1> to sign the petition online.

**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:** Following Mass on Thursday evenings there will be Adoration until 8.30 pm.

**St. Cyprian Tansi Prayer Group** will not meet during this time.

**Vianney Mission Prayer Group** will not meet during this time.

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

**Forthcoming Alpha Course:** The next Alpha Course was due to start on Tuesday April 21<sup>st</sup>. In view of the current projections for the Coronavirus pandemic, we have to postpone this course. However, those who have registered will be kept informed about any change of date. Much the easiest way to enrol is through the web-site at <http://stgregory.org.uk/alpha/>.

## SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

**Baptism Preparation:** The next Baptism Preparation will be on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July at 7pm in the Sacristy. Please note that you will need to phone Deacon Michael on 01601 647750 before you attend to book your place.

**First Holy Communion — 2020:** The present course is suspended until the normal programme can be re-established.

**Confirmation — 3<sup>rd</sup> Preparation Session:** The present course is suspended until the normal programme can be re-established. There is a provisional date for Confirmation of 20<sup>th</sup> November (Note change).

**Fairtrade:** Nestlé have decided to stop using fairtrade chocolate in their KitKat chocolate bars. This has come as a great disappointment to up to 27,000 farmers in Côte d'Ivoire, Fiji and Malawi. There is a petition asking Nestlé to reverse this decision: <https://www.change.org/p/ulf-mark-schneider-nestle-global-ceo-keep-kitkat-fairtrade> (Otherwise, have a break from KitKat.) So far over 24,000 people have signed, but Nestlé have not responded. As a Fairtrade parish, we should all be signing this.

## Notice from the Diocese

**Online Donation:** The Diocese has an online donation facility on the main Diocesan website through Virgin Money Giving (link below). If you use this option we ask that you please indicate in the notes section which parish, including the parish name and area (St Gregory's, Northampton) that you would like your donation to be attributed to. Please note that there is the facility to Gift Aid any donation <https://northamptondiocese.org/donate/>

**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)

**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) or Fr Andrew.

The Bishops' Conference have produced a film entitled "Global Healing" which can be found at <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/environment/global-healing/global-healing-films/main-film/> which highlights the state of our planet and looking more closely at the Pope's encyclical letter on caring for our common home – Laudato si'.

## Online Prayer resources during this time

Live-streamed Mass from the Cathedral  
<http://northamptoncathedral.org/live/>

Live-streamed Mass from Walsingham  
<https://www.walsingham.org.uk/live-stream/>

EWTN  
<https://www.ewtn.com/tv>

Sacred Space guided prayer  
<https://www.sacredspace.ie/>

Please pray for the soul of Amelia Woolmore whose funeral will be on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July. May she rest in peace.

# Scripture Readings 12th July 2020, 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Second Isaiah, writing around 550 BC, concludes his "Book of Comfort" to the Jewish exiles in Babylon with an invitation to a joyful banquet. After renewing His covenant of peace, God has reminded Israel that "my thoughts are not your thoughts": God's words come down gently to bring forth divine fruits, like the rain which enables the earth to yield its fruits.

The psalm give God praise and thanks for his power over all the earth and the rains which produce abundant crops.

Paul continues this theme of God's plan slowly moving towards its climax: creation is unable to attain its purpose without help, and it was made this way by God. Paul gives us a brilliantly clear vision of God's plan: with the coming of Christ creation is now groaning in the birth pangs of being set free.

It is worth listening carefully to Matthew's explanation of the parable of the sower. And especially to Jesus' very difficult statements that he talks to the crowds in parables because "they listen without hearing or understanding". He says "They have shut their eyes, for fear they should see, ... and be converted". The coming of Jesus brings both judgement and mercy. But some will not receive God's words, unless their minds are open and cease making their own image of God.

Psalm Response:

**Some seed fell into rich soil  
and produced its crop.**

(Is 55:10-11; Ps 64(65); Rom 8:18-23; Mt 13:1-23)

*Chris Oliver*

# The Season of Creation

## Tip No. 75:

***Living Sustainably with creation:*** Make it the new normal: we can save, 'dumping or recycling', when we maintain, mend & repair;

## Tip No. 74:

***Living Sustainably with creation:*** Doctors are recommending a diet that is anti-inflammatory and builds the immune system for our future;" ..... include home-cooked raw vegetables and fruit in every meal" Organic have a third more immunity building goodness and improves the soil! — Living Simply!!

**Actions to LiveSimply :** Communication regularly (telephone) with of our , 'family in faith,' can cheer our predicament, or with eye contact using WhatsApp, Messenger or Skype.

**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**

# SPUC's 2020 Sponsored Event

From 13-21 July 2020, SPUC's newly appointed Fundraising Officer, and St. Gregory's parishioner, William Currie, will be fasting for nine days to help stop home abortions. The threat posed by home abortions is clear: they are dangerous for women and will lead to more innocent babies being killed.

Emergency Covid-19 regulations introduced back in March saw home abortion legalised in England, Scotland and Wales. This means that,

## Building up the community of faith

During lockdown Fr Andrew and Caryll have been trying to keep in touch by telephone or email with as many parishioners as possible, but have been sadly hampered by the contact list being woefully out-of-date. Apologies to any who have been neglected. We are trying to correct the address-list; the 'Track and Trace' forms are helping us in this.

The lockdown has taught us how important it is to keep our data accurate; the recent General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) have made this a little more difficult. The only information we keep is names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses, apart from that which we have to keep for the registers; Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages and funerals. (We do not keep information about standing order donations here; they are managed at the diocesan fiancé office.)

In the event of a further lockdown or any other catastrophe, an up-to-date list would make pastoral care a great deal more effective, and apologies are due to any who felt neglected during this time.

for over three months, women have been able to self-administer powerful abortion drugs for both stages of a "medical" abortion at home without medical supervision.

William will be fasting with the ultimate goal of protecting mothers and babies from all abortion, including home abortion. Please consider supporting his efforts and sacrifice by making a donation at [www.spuc.org.uk/Donate](http://www.spuc.org.uk/Donate)

**"I saw another angel"**

The stained glass window in the south side of the church was made by a grandson of Margaret Mullan, and has been in her house for many years. Sadly, Margaret has now gone into a residential home, and the window has been given to the church. We are becoming a church of angels!

The quotation from the Book of the Apocalypse continues "with the eternal Gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth — to every nation and tribe and language and people." (14:6) May we fulfil that mission, and many thanks to the Mullan family.





### CAFOD coronavirus appeal

CAFOD is working in the most deprived areas of the world, helping local communities survive by:

- Delivering food to where it is needed most.
- Improving hygiene, handwashing and sanitation at the community and household level.
- Producing radio messages, posters and leaflets in local languages on risks and prevention.
- Training community volunteers to carry out awareness campaigns.

Visit <https://cafod.org.uk/Give/Donate-to-Emergencies/Coronavirus-appeal> or use a CAFOD envelope and give through the parish.



**During this time of restricted public worship, please keep reading the Bible. The August “Bible Alive” is now available — see the note elsewhere in this newsletter.**

