



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

Is Christmas for children?

“Christmas is for children, just for children grown-up's say.”

“I guess Christmas is for children
but aren't we all children Christmas day”

Words by Sammy Cahn, popularized by Glenn Campbell

The idea that “Christmas is for children” is one that is often stated, and in the sense that we are all God's children, cannot be denied.

However, for the toy industry, Christmas is about selling, and a significant part of their profit comes from Christmas presents for children. But Christmas is not just about toys!

Right at the centre of our Christmas celebration is the Christ-child, and another poem speaks of this:

Christmas is really
for the children.
Especially for children
who like animals, stables,
stars and babies wrapped
in swaddling clothes.
Then there are wise men,
kings in fine robes,
humble shepherds and a
hint of rich perfume.

Easter is not really
for the children
unless accompanied by
a cream filled egg.
It has whips, blood, nails,
a spear and allegations
of body snatching.
It involves politics, God
and the sins of the world.
It is not good for people
of a nervous disposition.
They would do better to
think on rabbits, chickens
and the first snowdrop
of spring.

Or they'd do better to
wait for a re-run of
Christmas without asking
too many questions about
what Jesus did when he grew up
or whether there's any connection.

Steve Turner

When we see the infant Jesus in the manger (the Bambino), we are also seeing the man who was Baptised by John, who was tempted in the wilderness, preached on the mountainside, entered Jerusalem on a donkey, carried his cross and died on Good Friday, rose from the dead and now lives in heaven. We see the same Jesus that we now see in sacramental form on the Altar. We see the same Jesus whose words we hear: “I absolve you from your sins”. We see the same Jesus who, we pray, will eventually invite us to share in the banquet of heaven.

Today we are invited to bring our own image of the Baby Jesus to be blessed for us to take to our homes that he may bless them. But it is too early for the baby to take his place in the manger, just as it is too early for Christmas presents to be opened. Place the image of the Baby Jesus somewhere safe until Christmas Day when he can take his place at the centre of the Nativity scene.

In the meanwhile, there are other things for children as we prepare for Christmas.

1. Abington Park is this year playing host to an exciting interactive trail to find the meaning of Christmas. During festive walks around the park between December 16th and December 30th, families will be able to search for clues and scan QR codes to find the reason for the season.

This treasure hunt for children and families, uses a series of videos to encourage conversation and share thoughts on the Christmas story as they walk and explore. QR codes are very easy to scan and most modern phones can scan them just by taking a photo. There are also several free apps available to scan QR codes in most mobile app stores.

Christmas will undoubtedly be different for many of us this year and churches are called to respond differently. Several churches have joined forces to remind the community of their presence using this excellent resource from Scripture Union.

In addition to the trail, families will be able to see beautiful artistic displays in the following churches;
Abington Avenue United Reformed Church, Park Avenue Methodist Church, St Gregory the Great and the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Abington Park.

2. We are now taking bookings for our interactive Christmas Eve experience outside the church. Experience the Christmas story in preparation for Christmas Day!
Times range from 9.00 am- 12.30 to start!

Tours take place around St Gregory's garden and last fifteen minutes finishing with a goodie bag for each child!

The tour is free but spaces are limited and each booking is for one household or support bubble.

So:

- * wrap up warm
- * start at the steps at the front of the church at your appointed time
- * remember there are no toilet facilities
- * it's 15 minutes in total
- * you must email stgregoryschristmaseve@outlook.com to book.

Notices of Interest

Confessions before Christmas: There will be a penitential liturgy at the Cathedral on Monday evening of this week, 14th December. There is also opportunity for confession at St Gregory's after Mass any day by arrangement with Fr Andrew (preferably by email).

Pease pray for the soul of Valerie Harris who died last Wednesday. May she rest in peace.

SPUC - Prayer Group; Help us save the lives of unborn children: SPUC Northampton is actively looking for people to join the local branch. We meet every few weeks in order to plan & arrange pro-life initiatives. This is a personal invitation for you to join us. We promise that there will be no pressure to do anything you are not comfortable with. If you are unable to join the branch how would you feel about being part of our prayer team? We are looking for people to form a prayer team who will support us through prayer on an ongoing basis & on special occasions. All we ask is that you spend some time in prayer in support of our pro-life work. This can be done in the comfort of your own home or with others in the group. If you would like to join the branch or join the prayer group please contact William on 07393965643 (text is fine) or wpcurrie@btinternet.com. Prayer is a very powerful weapon in the fight to save our unborn children and we beseech Our Lady of Guadalupe to intercede for us in this battle.

COVID-19 Precautions We are in 'tier 2', & as responsible members of our community, we obey the Government Regulations in solidarity with so many others on whom are being imposed restrictions which impact severely on their lives & livelihoods. Now that we can return to Mass, we must continue to try to suppress the spread of the virus & support those who remain vulnerable.

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.

Repository: We have a stock of Calendars, diaries and Christmas cards available. If you wish to buy any, please come to the Church between 9 and 10.30am and speak to a Steward who will show you what to do and where to go.

Bible Alive for December 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.

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School. If you have a child due to start primary school in September 2021, St Gregory's are welcoming parents to visit the school and see it in action. Contact 01604 403511 to arrange a visit. Closing date for place applications is 15th January 2021 at 5pm.

NYMO invite all young adults to an online advent retreat. Open to all aged 18-35yrs, each Tuesday of Advent, beginning on 1st December between 8.00-9.30pm join the team on zoom for a time of prayer, worship and reflection. Email hello@nymo.org for more information.

The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), of which CAFOD is an active member has launched a nationwide appeal for funds. Visit <https://cafod.org.uk/Give/Donate-to-Emergencies/Coronavirus-appeal> or use a CAFOD envelope and give through the parish.

Exploring the Post-Lockdown Church: The webinar series has been wonderful, and thank you to all who promoted it and came along throughout the series. We have had over 3,000 views! This is definitely something we will be looking to do again in the future. If you want to catch up with any you missed, all the videos are here: <http://formationpathways.co.uk/exploring-the-post-lockdown-church-webinar-series/>

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

Christmas Flowers: Envelopes are available in the Display Area for donations for Christmas flowers, which may be given in memory of a person, in thanksgiving, or as a gift! Names of those in whose memory flowers are given will be included in the newsletter for Christmas. **As last year, arty crafty people are invited to do window displays - trays will be available after either Mass next Sunday.**

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

Vianney Mission Prayer Group will not meet during this time.

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.

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>

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next Baptism Preparation will be on Monday 11th January, at 7pm in the Sacristy.

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

First Holy Communion 2021: If you have a child who wishes to make their 1st Holy Communion next year & are in school years 3-6, please email Stella at swatts49@outlook.com, who will note your name & the name & age of your child. This is still very much a first step as we are still unsure of how we can prepare the children at the moment; please be patient &, as soon as we possibly can, we'll give you more info about our programme & timings at which stage you can decide whether or not you wish to proceed.

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

Parish Finances: As colder weather is here & we need to turn the heating on, our finances will come under a bit of strain. We have kept solvent through the lockdown; great thanks to all who have been so generous.

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)**

Tip No. 120 Living sustainably with creation: petrol & diesel S.U.V 's while prestigious and popular, use twice as much fuel as hybrid vehicles and so.. puts twice the CO2 into the atmosphere; increasing floods, droughts and wild fires.

Tip No. 121 Solidarity with the Poor: Try to reduce the number of vehicles per household to one maximum. Sharing needs sacrifices but can be so good for relationships.

Scripture Readings 13th December 2020, 3rd Sunday of Advent, Year B

In words used by Jesus to announce that the Messianic era has come, Isaiah confidently rejoices that Zion will be restored after the return from exile. It will be the focal point for all peoples, where God will dwell in his renewed creation at the end of time. Everyone will behave with justice. It will be total salvation for God's people – but sinners will receive their just punishment.

The response to Luke's Magnificat repeats Isaiah: "My whole being shall exult in my God".

Paul ends his letter to the Thessalonians by emphasising the wholeness of each person's salvation. Simple rules of behaviour enable the new Christian way of living to become automatic: show respect and patience to all. Rejoice and give thanks always, for God is faithful, and will make you "perfect and holy".

Last week Mark briefly described the Baptist's announcement of Christ's coming. Today John gives us more detail, immediately after the gospel's prologue. The Baptist's answers to his questioners become shorter and shorter, until they ask an open question, to which he replies more fully. John's is the only gospel which sees Jesus as existing before creation. The Baptist testifies that Jesus' identity has been confirmed by God. Baptism appears to be well-known, though Jesus' disciples only started baptising after he had risen.

Psalm Response:

My soul rejoices in my God.

(Isa 61:1-2a, 10-11; Luke 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54; 1 Thess 5:16-24 ; John 1:6-8, 19-28)

Chris Olive

RED BOXES

These are part of a money raising scheme, organised by Missio, to provide funds for the Foreign Missions, especially in Africa where resources to cope with Covid are desperately short. One way of donating favoured by many is to put spare change into a Red Box on a daily or weekly etc basis in the hope that seemingly insignificant amounts will total a worthwhile sum, especially once all Parish contributions are taken together.

The box holder is asked to remove the existing seal from their box, empty the contents into the collection envelope provided, re-seal the box with the new (receipt) label and take the envelope – securely sealed - to St Gregory's. This is brought to church twice a year (approximately November or December and May) and given to the clergy or one of the Red Box officials. Some people prefer to donate notes or write a cheque for the amount they have collected; others have set up a Standing Order. Whatever

the method of donation, where Gift Aid is applicable and applied for, the Government will add significantly to the value of contributions without any extra cost to the donor.

Many of you already support the Red Box scheme. Those who do not may like to consider doing so and should approach the clergy or one of the Red Box officials for more information. Please support this venture with your usual degree of generosity, if not even more. All of us are suffering financially due to Covid but Africa's pain exceeds ours. Any offering is better than none and prompted Jesus to praise the poor widow who gave seemingly little of value but this was, to her, all that she had (*Luke 21 1-4*). Pope Francis frequently echoes such sentiments. God bless us all.

The Red Box officers (called Local Secretaries) are now Dorothy Pallett and Alec Unsworth who, with the clergy, have taken over organisation of the system and collection of funds after the considerable efforts of the previous people in charge, Desmond and Mary Keohane. Other volunteers (called Promoters) look after groups of Red Box participants.

The Year of Joseph

Pope Francis has designated the coming year as the 'Year of Joseph'. He has written:

"WITH A FATHER'S HEART: that is how Joseph loved Jesus, whom all four Gospels refer to as *"the son of Joseph"*.

Matthew and Luke, the two Evangelists who speak most of Joseph, tell us very little, yet enough for us to appreciate what sort of father he was, and the mission entrusted to him by God's providence.

We know that Joseph was a lowly carpenter (*Mt 13:55*), betrothed to Mary (*Mt 1:18; Lk 1:27*). He was a "just man" (*Mt 1:19*), ever ready to carry out God's will as revealed to him in the Law (*Lk 2:22.27.39*) and through four dreams (*Mt 1:20; 2:13.19.22*). After a long and tiring journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, he beheld the birth of the Messiah in a stable, since "there was no place for them" elsewhere (*Lk 2:7*). He witnessed the adoration of the shepherds (*Lk 2:8-20*) and the Magi (*Mt 2:1-12*), who represented respectively the people of Israel and the pagan peoples.

Joseph had the courage to become the legal father of Jesus, to whom he gave the name revealed by the angel: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (*Mt 1:21*). As we know, for ancient peoples, to give a name to a person or to a thing, as Adam did in the account in the Book of Genesis (*2:19-20*), was to establish a relationship.

In the Temple, forty days after Jesus' birth, Joseph and Mary offered their child to the Lord and listened with amazement to Simeon's prophecy concerning Jesus and his Mother (*Lk 2:22-35*). To protect Jesus from Herod, Joseph dwelt as a foreigner in Egypt (*Mt 2:13-18*). After returning to his own country, he led a hidden life in the tiny and obscure village of Nazareth in Galilee, far from Bethlehem, his ancestral town, and from Jerusalem and the Temple. Of Nazareth it was said, "No prophet is to rise" (*Jn 7:52*) and indeed, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (*Jn 1:46*). When, during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary lost track of the twelve-year-old Jesus, they anxiously sought him out and they found him in the Temple, in discussion with the doctors of the Law (*Lk 2:41-50*)."

Pope Francis invites us to think of Joseph in seven ways:

- 1 **A beloved father**
- 2 **A tender and loving father**
- 3 **An obedient father**
- 4 **An accepting father**
- 5 **A creatively courageous father**
- 6 **A working father**
- 7 **A father in the shadows**

There will be more about this in the coming months.

Christmas Mass arrangements

We will be under the same restrictions of social distancing for Christmas, and want to make it possible for as many as possible to attend Mass. In addition to the usual Masses (5.00 pm on Christmas Eve, Midnight, 9.00 am and 11.00 am on Christmas Day, it would be possible to have an additional later vigil Mass, perhaps at 6.30 pm. If

people would find that a help, please can they let Fr Andrew know (email is best). In recent years the 5.00 pm Vigil Mass has been the best attended; if similar numbers were to come this year we would have to turn some people away. Under present rules, we still cannot sing, but there could be a soloist, though joining in would be illegal.

Tuesday 17 November 2020, (7.30-8.30 pm) Preparing the Way for the Lord. Mark's Gospel & The Season of Advent

Tuesday 19 January 2021, (7.30-8.30 pm) 'He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures' (Lk 24:45) ^{SEP} The importance of God's Word for Christian identity & everyday living

Tuesday 16 February 2021, 7.30-8.30 pm: 'Many more began to believe in him because of his Word' (John 4:41) John's Gospel & The Season of Lent

Each session will include input, prayer and the opportunity to make comments and ask questions. Cost: No charge but there will be the opportunity to make a donation. Please register in advance to secure a place by e mail or phone: email admin@nores.org.uk Once you booking is received you will be sent details of how to join the online Zoom sessions.

Conference of England and Wales declared this year 2020 as: THE GOD WHO SPEAKS: A YEAR OF THE WORD" and chose the theme in line with the spirit of the document, Verbum Domini. This initiative will be continued through 2021, not least because of the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The God Who Speaks- Our Liturgy of the Word

A Series of 3 Online Zoom Sessions exploring the upcoming Lectionary Readings and Seasons of the Liturgical Year. A valuable opportunity to develop our engagement with the Scriptures that we hear proclaimed at the Liturgy of the Word at Mass. Led by Mgr Kevin McGinnell, Chair of the Diocesan Liturgy Commission and Alex Heath is Adviser for Adult Faith Formation

Vaccines

There has been concern that some vaccines have been developed using cells derived from tissue from aborted babies. The vaccine itself does not contain such cells, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Academy of Life have expressed the view that one may in good conscience and for a grave reason receive a vaccine sourced in this way. We have a moral duty to protect ourselves and others from the virus. Do not be swayed by the untruthful allegations which are circulating on the internet.

SECOND COLLECTIONS

13th September

4th October

11th October

18th October

15th November

29th November

13th December

20th December

Holy Places

CAFOD

Peter's Pence

World Mission

World Communications

Day for Life

Home Mission

Sea Sunday

