



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

Gaudete, Rejoice, be Happy!

The second reading of today’s Mass tells us to be ‘happy at all times’; other translations use the word ‘rejoice’.

In the face of the world’s problems, we may well be thinking that there is little to rejoice about just now.

In Bethlehem there is no Christmas tree in Manger Square, no decorations; most of the shops are closed, and most of the celebrations for Christmas are cancelled or seriously cut back. The mayor of Bethlehem has said that “despite the harsh conditions, Bethlehem is always armed with the message of Christ, the message of love and peace”. However “the city is still living under a strict siege by closing all its entrances either with dirt barriers, iron gates, or military checkpoints, and as a result, the movement of people is stifled.” We may well reflect upon that as we decorate our homes and the church this Christmas.

It is not only the Holy Land that is in turmoil; the war in Ukraine continues with ferocity, and here in this country the use of the foodbanks and other support for those most affected by the cost of living crisis grows daily.

St Paul continues in this reading: “May the God of peace make you perfect and holy”. The linking between happiness and peace

comes again in St Paul’s letter to the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, ‘rejoice’ . . . and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”. (*Philippians 4:4,7*)

The word ‘happy’ seems to be too feeble a translation, and even ‘rejoice’ is weak in this context. When a war ends the people rejoice, but here, it is the rejoicing that brings about the peace. This is not how we would naturally understand how this should work.

But the rejoicing is “in the Lord”; the rejoicing is in thanksgiving to God. Peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (*see Galatians 5:22*); it is a peace that surpasses human understanding; it is not a human construct, it is not framed in a treaty or a military surrender; rather it derives from souls consecrated to God, and comes as a gift from him. Rejoicing is in the Holy Spirit, and peace is a fruit of the Spirit.

This happiness is not just for Christmas, it is for life; not just for the duration of our life — it is for the life of those whose lives are under threat in Ukraine and Gaza and in the Mediterranean or the English Channel on blow-up boats. For all of them, we pray for peace; that lasting peace which is beyond our making.

Christmas Flowers

There will be the usual Christmas flower envelopes on the table in the narthex, but they need to be handed in to the Sacristy before next Thursday please.

Christmas Decorating

With the fourth Sunday of Advent being also Christmas Eve, the normal pattern of not decorating until *after* the fourth Sunday is not practicable, and decorating will be done on Saturday 23rd December after Mass.

Window Trays

If you can decorate a tray for one of the windows, please collect a tray from the Sacristy after Mass and bring it back on Saturday after Mass.

Christmas Tree

Would someone like to put this up and put up the decorations and lights on it.

A letter received from a parishioner

Recently, when the news came about the church heating being on the ‘blink’, I suppose there were a few moans from members of the congregation.

But we should not forget that most of us go home from Mass on Sunday to our warm homes, and food in our fridges; a lot different from the people of Gaza and Ukraine and other parts of the world, who have no homes, no food and no future.

So if we have to put on an extra cardigan or jumper while attending Mass on a Sunday, think of the millions of people who would love to be in our shoes.

A grateful parishioner

Donorbox

St. Gregory’s has now signed up with Donorbox to enable people to make donations to the Church via a QR code (see below).

This is a safe & easy way of making a one-off donation without having to have cash on you!

If you have a smartphone, just point your camera at the QR code, click the link & the site will see you through the donation process.

There is a larger version of this QR code in the Narthex area and in the hall for refreshment donations!



Notices of Interest



We welcome into the family of the Church
Remi Sean Mcandrew and
Assumpta Sophie Ogheneruno Igho
who received Christian Baptism recently.
Please pray for them and their families.

Repository: There is a display for Christmas - cards, books & items are on sale. Catholic diaries with the order of the Mass are available. **PLEASE** can anyone help with sales to help my loyal, small group of helpers? Anyone with a calculator can do it - all items priced! Please note that we can only accept cash! *Contact Kath.healey.789@gmail.com.*

Bible Alive for January is now available - only £3.00! If you wish to purchase a copy, they are in the narthex as you come into church. December is now sold out! There are, however, several small booklets of Walk with Me available for Advent. Please see the table in the Narthex.

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!

Thursday Holy Hour & Adoration: Holy Hour remains as Holy Two Hours, from 9am until 11am. It is important that at least two people are present throughout the time of adoration. During cold weather, Adoration will be in the Sacristy.

Online Advent Retreat: Week 4, Monday 18th December, 7.30-8.30pm. Our online Advent retreat this year is "**Let the Wilderness Bloom!**". Join Fr John Udris and Avril Baigent to explore the desert life of John the Baptist. This week's theme is vulnerability: how our faith grows the more we learn to rely on God. Join us live on Monday evening or access the recording at a more convenient time. Register here: <https://pastoralministryoffice.org/bloom/>

Missio Matters: To thank you for helping their work on the Foreign Missions, through prayer and donations, Missio would like each of their supporters to have a free calendar for 2024. It tells you dates when you ought to be in church, like Sundays, and lists Saints Days and other feasts along with quotes from people including our Pope Francis. The calendars, with your name on the back, are in the red box as you come into church. Please collect yours ASAP. Items are in alphabetical order. It would help if you keep it that way. God bless. Have a blessed New Year. Alec

Church Cleaning: The next clean will be **this Wednesday 20th December** to get the Church ready for Christmas – all help gratefully received. Thereafter, the routine will revert to last Saturday of the month, starting with 27th January. Thank you!

Bl. Cyprian Tansi Prayer Group continues to pray together online via Skype and by telephone and on the first Saturday of the month, here in the Church, from 10am-11am.

Tots @ St Gregory's: St Greg's Tiny Tots runs each Tuesday in term time from 9:30-11:30 in the church hall. We charge £1 per group which includes snacks & coffee! If you have care of a pre-school child, please join us!!

Fire Safety – Important notice. Unlit candles **must not** be placed on the trays under the places for candles and candles must not be stacked one on top of another.

Bookings are open for Lux 2024. For school years 7 to 13. Our theme this year is Dive. See the website for more information and to book: <https://nymo.org/lux-dive/>. If you have any questions then please email info@nymo.org.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be on Monday 8th January 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: All sessions are on Saturday afternoons at Sacred Heart, Weston Favell. Details, dates, times have been given to all those who are registered.

Confirmation in 2024: To be announced.

Penitential Liturgies

There will be the usual opportunities for confession before Christmas with a penitential liturgy at the Cathedral on Monday evening 18th December at 7.00 pm and at St Gregory's on Tuesday evening, 19th December, also at 7.00 pm. Please make use of this Sacrament.

Mission Northampton: There will be a weekly Zoom course entitled "Secrets of Paul", lasting 10 weeks on Wednesdays starting on 10th January and running until 20th March (with a break for half-term on 21st February). There is a charge of £10 for the course, & visit <https://northamptondiocese.org/courses/secrets-of-paul-online/> to register.

Used Postage Stamps: As Christmas rapidly draws near could I appeal to everyone to save their used postage stamps. It doesn't cost anything except a bit of time. They are being sent in the name of St Gregory's in support of the Red Box appeal. Thank you, *Linda Fleming*

Choir Notes: Saturday morning practices will take place 11-12.30pm every week until 17th December. *Alec*

Refreshment Donations:

Below is the schedule for refreshment donations through the year:

<i>From the first Sunday in Advent to the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord:</i>	<i>The Hope Centre</i>
From the Second Sunday in ordinary time to the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday:	Gregory Care
Through Lent and Eastertide:	CAFOD
Ordinary Time until the end of August:	Refreshment Fund
September until the Harvest collection:	CAFOD
After harvest until the beginning of Advent:	The Bible Society

Gregory Care: A massive thank you to all the parishioners of St Gregory's who have made wreaths for our housebound & those who have donated gifts & crackers for the families Gregory Care supports. Your support has been overwhelming, so too have been the unexpected monetary donations as well as people giving their time, skills & goods. We (Catherine & Carole) are in the privileged position of the 'go between's' & we see the enormous difference these gifts mean to people and how much they are appreciated. Please remember in your prayers all those who have donated to this recent appeal & all those who will benefit from your generosity.

Cathedral Foodstore: Our continued thanks to all who donate to the toiletries for the Foodstore. Please remember that the Foodstore is open to everyone who may be experiencing hardship. Food can be purchased at substantially reduced prices (as it now operates as a food larder) All that is required is a form of ID and a genuine reason for needing to use the larder. It operates between 10:15 - 12:15 every Thursday in the St Thomas Centre (behind the Cathedral).

Mission Prayer

Heavenly Father
it is your will that we should make disciples of all nations.
We ask you to bless the mission of our Diocese of Northampton
and guide our hearts and minds
so that your will might be done
and your kingdom be build up here on earth.
We pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit,
without which our work is in vain,
and we entrust ourselves to your beloved Son,
for we know that he is with us for all time, now and for ever.
Amen

Prayer for Peace for Ukraine and the Holy Land:

Please continue to pray for an end to wars, and for all victims of war:

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

17th December 2023, 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 Oliver

We have benefitted from Chris Oliver's notes on the Scripture Readings for many years now. Please pray for the soul of Marina Oliver, Chris' wife. Her funeral will take place at the church of St Anne, Nantwich at 11.30 am this Wednesday. Please remember her in your prayers.

A letter from Bishop David for the 3rd Sunday of Advent 2023



In this third week of advent, you will notice that the colour of the candle is different to the usual purple. It is a rose coloured candle symbolising Gaudete Sunday. 'Gaudete, Christus est natus', 'Rejoice! that Christ is born'.

Joy is a gift from God, we recognise that. We are mindful of the many times we have tried to manufacture joy. But the Prophet Isaiah gives us a picture of joy when he speaks of what the Lord will do, how the Lord will bring new life to the wasteland. They will come to Zion, shouting for joy, everlasting joy on their faces. Joy and gladness will go with them and sorrow and lament be ended.

It is important that we appreciate that this is a gift from the Lord, and it is in response to what God has done. How often we find ourselves looking quite sorry for ourselves even in church. No wonder our Holy Father invites us not to look like sourpusses. We can be easily distracted from the heart of the Kerygma, the Gospel that God who created us and took compassion upon us when we

were fallen into sin, has sent a Saviour and that Saviour has come with a promise of the spirit to those who are open to receiving the gifts of God. That is a great message of joy.

I always remember hearing where the word Kerygma came from. Apparently, a slave would be chosen by a general, to return to Rome with the message in his hand that the battle had been won. He did so gladly and rejoicing because he knew that once the message was delivered the emperor would grant him his freedom.

Maybe we need to see joy in those terms. Our joy is given to us when we appreciate what we have received from the Lord and nothing can take away from that experience of joy. So we have thought about hope and we have thought about peace, and in so many ways this week in thinking about joy, we are reminding ourselves that God's work is fruitful and that we can indeed rejoice.

Sincerely,

Bishop David Oakley, Bishop of Northampton. December 17, 2023

Pope Francis teaching us about prayer in the Spirit

"Every time we begin to pray to Jesus it is the Holy Spirit who draws us on the way of prayer by his prevenient grace. Since he teaches us to pray by recalling Christ, how could we not pray to the Spirit too? That is why the Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church §2670*). In the Spirit everything is brought to life: the possibility of encountering Christ is open to Christians of every time and place. The possibility of encountering Christ, not only as a historical figure, is open. He attracts Christ to our hearts; it is the Spirit who makes us encounter Jesus.

Without the Spirit there is no relationship with Christ and with the Father, because the Spirit opens our heart to God's presence and draws it into that "vortex" of love that is the very heart of God. We are not merely guests and pilgrims journeying on this earth; we are also guests and pilgrims in the mystery of the Trinity. We are like Abraham, who, one day, welcoming three wayfarers in his own tent, encountered God. If we can truly invoke God, calling him "Abba — Dad", it is because the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

URGENT NOTE ON FINANCES If you have transferred to standing orders and pay income tax please contact Fr Andrew (preferably by email) so that the Gift Aid can be linked to your donation. Claims can only be made for up to three years, so there is some urgency about this.

Diocesan Bible Studies

A Series of 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 the Liturgical Formation Team with presentations by:

Liz Clark,
Fr Andrew Behrens,
Mgr Kevin McGinnell,
Deacon Peter Collins
Fr Allan Jones CRIC,

Wednesday 22 November 2023
Celebrating Advent and Christmas, Year B

Sessions in 2024

Wednesday 31 January 2024,
Preparing for Lent

Wednesday 10 April 2024,
Celebrating Eastertide

Wednesday 5 June,
2 Corinthians in Ordinary Time Year B

Wednesday 11 September 2024,
The Letter of St James in Ordinary Time Year B

Wednesday 27 November, 2024,
Celebrating Advent and Christmas, Year C

Each session runs from 7:30-8:30pm and 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 mailing:

deaconpeter.collins@northamptondiocese.org

Once your booking is received you will be sent details of how to join the online Zoom sessions.

Cathedral Foodstore

THE PEOPLE OF GAZA AND ISRAEL ARE IN NEED OF HELP

Surely everyone has been shocked and saddened by the devastating conflict in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. By last Tuesday more than 10,000 people had been killed and over 1.4 million people been displaced from their homes; many more by the week-end.

Last week it was noted that the word 'ceasefire' had itself been weaponised, and this week it is being suggested that to go on a demonstration in support of the Palestinians in Gaza is a 'Hate March'. The tragedy of this argument is that there is now a serious risk of the 'far right' groups organising a counter-demonstration, leading to violence. It has become difficult to the even-handed is simply pleading and praying for peace. It would seem that on both

sides, there are those who are actively seeking conflict. It is clear that the extremists on both sides are seeking an impossible outcome. The state of Israel does exist and has a right to continue to exist, and the equating of the Palestinians to the Amalekites (*see 1 Samuel 15:3*) as Prime Minister Netanyahu did on 29th October this year is equally dangerous.

Many aid workers have been killed in this evil conflict, and whatever it is called, we must pray that the fighting and killing will stop, and leaders be found who will work for peace and co-existence with justice and equity.

Preparation for First Holy Communion — Growing Up Catholic

Today at the 11.00 Mass we are welcoming those who will be in the First Holy Communion programme from St Gregory's parish this year. We welcome the children and their parents. As a mark of this important step in their family life, we are giving them a picture of the



Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. There is a prayer on the back of the card which is in Italian, but translates:

O God, our Father,
 who in your family
 gave us a true model of life,
 let the same virtues and love
 flourish in our families,
 so that
 reunited in your home
 we can one day enjoy
 endless joy.
 Through Christ, our Lord.
 Amen

Please pray this prayer with the intention for our First Holy Communion families.

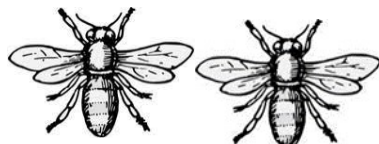
We have not made definite plans for next year, but anyone who would like to join the team will be very welcome, there is no need for previous experience or any particular knowledge; all that is needed is a love for Jesus, a love for the Church and a willingness to work with children and their parents. This year all sessions are on Saturday afternoons and are held at Sacred Heart church near the Weston Favell shopping centre, but if next year we need to run parallel sessions, a decision will need to be made about when and where that would be. All helpers and leaders are required to have DBS clearance

A key part of our preparation is that parents/carers have a vital role in the process. They cannot just drop off their child and go shopping! The Baptism Rite calls parents the 'first teachers of their child in the ways of faith', and the Second Vatican Council restated the traditional teaching of the Church that it is the parents who have the primary responsibility for the Christian education of their children. "The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute" (*Vatican II Gravissimum Educationis* §3)

[DBS is the 'Disclosure and Barring Service', a government body which helps Voluntary Sector organisations to make safer recruitment decisions by identifying candidates who may be unsuitable for certain types of work, especially involving children or vulnerable adults through access to criminal record information.]

The Ministry of Welcome

The Three Bees



Belong

Believe

Behave

Last week this diagram showed the traditional sequence but we saw that this does not accord with nature, where we belong to a family before we can know anything or have any idea about how to behave.

In the Synod agenda, we are asked to reach out to the marginalised, and almost by definition, they will have little or no understanding of a Christian way of life. Indeed, why should we expect anyone who has no faith in Jesus to follow his teaching?

Jesus did not impose conditions on those who followed him. He did not say that they could only follow him if they did this or stopped doing that. On the other hand, we know that many, when they got to know him, did change their life.

Our task, as missionary disciples, is to invite people to come to get



to know Jesus. This is the main function of the Alpha course. It is an introduction to belonging by demonstrating that the family of Jesus, the family of the Church is a welcoming environment to be in.

Alpha is not the only way of doing this, but it is a tried and tested way, and although its origins were not in the Catholic Church, it is now being used more by Catholics than in any other denomination. It does not attempt to teach the whole of the Catholic Faith, nor does it deny anything we believe. It simply helps people to have a relationship with Jesus, and to know that they are loved by him, and that they belong. The rest is up to the Holy Spirit and the good example that we set.

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)**

First session:	September 19th:	Is there more to life than this?
Second Session:	September 26th:	Who is Jesus?
Third Session:	October 3rd:	Why did Jesus die?
Fourth Session:	October 10th:	How can I have faith?
Fifth Session:	October 17th:	Why and how do I pray?
Sixth Session:	October 31st:	Why and how should I read the Bible?
Seventh Session:	November 7th:	How does God guide us?
Away-Day:	November 11th:	Who is the Holy Spirit?
Eighth Session:	November 14th:	How can I resist evil?
Ninth Session:	November 21st:	Why and how should I tell others?
Tenth Session:	November 28th:	Does God heal today?
Eleventh Session:	December 4th:	What about the Church?

Next Alpha will be in the Autumn.

O God, our Father,
 who in your family
 gave us a true model of life,
 let the same virtues and love

flourish in our families,
so that
reunited in your home
we can one day enjoy
endless joy.
Through Christ, our Lord.
Amen

Gregory Care and the Cathedral Larder

Be an Angel to a Child this Christmas

There will be a board in church over the next few Sundays; if you are in a position to buy a gift for a child, please take a look at what you can do.

Gregory Care are trying to help as many families as possible over Christmas supplying gifts for children who otherwise may not receive any.

We thank you all once again, for your ongoing support donating toiletries.

The Cathedral Foodstore where the toiletries are distributed is one of the few food larder's that offer toiletries, even though hygiene poverty continues. You may further support the Foodstore by purchasing 'Gift Certificates' again this year, for your family and friends - who are difficult to buy for! - See Catherine or Carole