



# 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

# A Tale of Hope

Pope Francis cancelled his Wednesday audience last week as he remained in hospital. We pray for his continued recovery. In place of a reflection on his address, we have an account of a place where his message is being heard, and changes are taking place.

The Church in Holland has been going through a very difficult time over the last several decades, and has been declining steadily. This was reflected in a question that was asked of the new Bishop-elect of Breda on his appointment in 2011: “Are you the last bishop of the diocese? Will the Church now finally go to rest and be over with?”

In 1968 all the seminaries in Holland had closed down, and very quickly the number of men recognising a vocation to priesthood dropped. It was ten years later that 18 year-old Jan Liesen felt called to the priesthood, but there was no seminary in his diocese. However, by then a new seminary had opened in the diocese of Roermond in the extreme south of Holland. He was ordained to that diocese and worked there from his ordination in 1984 until 2010 when he was appointed auxiliary bishop to 's-Hertogenbosch, and the following year was appointed diocesan bishop of Breda.

The general mind-set was one of managed decline. As the number of priests declined, so the number of Masses declined, the number of people attending them declined, churches were closed. At the time of his appointment just 1% of the ‘Catholic’ population attended Mass. A survey in 2006 found that of those who identified as ‘Catholic’, only 27% claimed to believe in God. (*God in the Netherlands, Ronald Meester, G. Dekker*)

Bishop Liesen had chosen on his ordination as bishop the motto “Deus Providebit” (God will provide), the words that Abraham had said when Isaac asked him what was to be sacrificed. This was an expression of his complete trust in God when the situation seemed to be hopeless. This might well have been the response to his appointment to Breda. It was a diocese that was struggling to survive, and focussed on survival.

If that trajectory was to be followed, he might well be the last bishop of Breda! It was clear that a different strategy was needed, and it was the same book that is inspiring our evangelistic strategy that gave Bishop Liesen the inspiration for evangelisation in his diocese. That book is “Divine Renovation” by Fr James Mallon.

He realised that if the parishes of the diocese were to become truly missional, the diocese had to set the example, and there needed to be vision and the diocesan staff and structures had to reflect that vision.

Just as all this was being established, the bishop fell ill. After investigation, he was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer, and given a prognosis of just a year to live.

“I couldn’t believe – you know, we were so ready, so on fire to work for the renewal of the Church. Why is this happening? I found it very hard to understand that.”

While the bishop was in hospital, the work of renewal in the diocese continued. He had sufficiently inspired others that the plans they had made did not get put on hold, or worse, cancelled.

It is still early days, but Alpha has made an enormous change. Through it, many are finding their faith is re-awakening. It is not so much in the form of one momentous change, but in the form of many small things that are happening. A number of parishes are re-forming themselves and finding their mission identities, and many of the priests are taking up the call to evangelisation, and refocussing on Jesus rather than maintenance of the parish.

In the face of difficulties, it is so easy to allow the problems to become the total concern, and the resources, both financial and personal directed away from the main purpose of the Church. Our main purpose is to follow the command of Jesus to “proclaim the Good News”. If we do that effectively, the other problems will resolve themselves. If we do not, the problems will increase.

So, instead of priests fruitlessly seeking volunteers for ministries in the Church, people who are filled with the love of Jesus are coming forward, offering themselves for service. Most of these are people whose lives have been changed through the experience of Alpha, not simply Mass-goers; in them, the prophesy of Ezekiel that God will “will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” (*Ezekiel 36:26*) has been realised.

The diocese of Breda is on the road to recovery. And a year after Bishop Liesen’s diagnosis, his cancer has shrunk; his health is returning. Many prayers are being answered.

As his health improves, the diocese is also gaining strength, and the trust that ‘God will provide’ has been fruitful in both cases.

Here in Northampton there is a similar vision from our bishop, and we are not the only parish to be following this path of evangelisation. Please pray for God’s blessing on this!



# Notices of Interest

**Car Park Safety:** Please remember that Parents/Carers are responsible for children in their charge whilst using the car park. Neither the Parish nor the Diocese are responsible for the safety of persons (adults or children), cars or their contents while in the car-park.

**Repository:** The Repository is open after every Sunday Mass wherever possible! 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](mailto:Kath.healey.789@gmail.com).

**Bible Alive** for June & July 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.

**Toilets:** I should not have to be saying this, but PLEASE, if you use the toilets, flush them afterwards! Several times over the past couple of weeks I have had to flush the toilets in the ladies' – this really isn't acceptable. *Caryll*

**Unity Walk:** A Walk of Unity between People of Different Faiths, visiting 6 different places of worship, on 25<sup>th</sup> June, with a break at noon for refreshments. Please see poster for full details.

**Caritas Northampton:** The following items are needed for local families with young children:  
Double bed and mattresses x 2  
Wardrobe, chest of drawers, table and chairs. If anyone has anything to donate could they please call Caritas on 01604 434362 to arrange collection.

**National Catholic Grandparents' Pilgrimage to Walsingham:** Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> July from 11am to 4pm. A day of faith & fun for all the family. Please see poster for full details.

**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-12pm.

**Thursday Holy Hour & Adoration:** Holy Hour is now Holy Two Hours, from 9am until 11am. This will continue while there are sufficient numbers to sustain it, and remains in the Sacristy for the time being.

**Choir notes:** The next choir practice is after evening Mass on Thursday 29 June, the Holy Day feast of St Peter and St Paul. *Alec*

## SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

**Baptism Preparation:** The next session will be on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> June in the Sacristy at 7pm. Please note you will need to phone Deacon Michael on 07999808997 before you attend, to book a place.

**First Holy Communion 2023:** Enrolment for 2024 will be in the autumn; please watch this newsletter for information nearer the time.

**Confirmation in 2023:** Those interested in Confirmation preparation should have spoken to Helen and will know the plan for the coming months.

**Can You Help Gregory Care?** Gregory Care are in the process of tidying up a family garden in the Eastfield area. We are looking for someone who might help dig over a small vegetable plot to help the lady start to grow some of her own food. It would only take a couple of hours and is a 'one off job'.

If anyone could help please speak to one of the Gregory Care team or text message us (number below) and we'll get back to you

**Food Parcels:** Please contact Gregory Care (07434 669011) if you or anyone you know would benefit from receiving a food parcel.

**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. Unlit candles **MUST NOT** be placed on these trays in any circumstances & must not be stacked one on top of another. This has been happening in recent weeks, and must not continue.

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

## URGENT NOTE ON FINANCES

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

**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:** Below is the schedule for refreshment donations through the year:

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

**Alpha in the Autumn:** The sessions will start in September, and although evenings will be light then, by the time it finishes it will be the first week in December, and many are less happy about coming out, so this will be an 'on-line' course through Zoom. However, so that those on the course can meet face-to-face, there will be a welcome session the week before the official start, on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September in the Hall at 7.15 pm. Please register at [www.stgregory.org.uk/alpha](http://www.stgregory.org.uk/alpha) and the zoom link will be sent out in the week before each session. For any who live far away, we are sorry if you are unable to get to the 'face-to-face' session on 12<sup>th</sup> September, please do not let this put you off joining the course.

## 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.

## Assembly Insight

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the ages."  
(*Matthew 28:19-20*)

## Prayer 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 18<sup>th</sup> June 2023, 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Year A

After escaping from Egypt and journeying for three months through the desert, the Israelites arrive at Sinai where God offers the covenant. Israel is invited to be his people, given special protection. In return they are to be “a kingdom of priests, a holy nation”. The whole people are set apart to be intermediaries between God and the whole of mankind, taking knowledge of the one true God to all peoples.

The psalm sings joyfully of God while entering his temple: "he made us, we belong to him".

We begin our readings from Paul's letter to the Romans with this dense statement of the doctrine of atonement. God is not an offended deity to be appeased by his son's sacrifice. "God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." God and Christ worked together to enable mankind to be "at one" with them. And now that we are reconciled "we will be

saved by his life", our new life in Christ, "the love of God poured into us through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

After more healings, Matthew's gospel tells how Jesus went round "teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness". For the enormous task of spreading the gospel, he appoints 12 Apostles and gives them their mission. Jesus' ministry was almost entirely limited to Israel, and initially the Apostles are similarly restricted.

Psalm response: **We are his people, the sheep of his flock**

(Exodus 19: 2-6; Psalm 99(100): 2-3.5; Romans 5: 6-11; Matthew 9: 36 – 10: 8)

Chris Oliver

## The Ministry of Welcome — Our 'One Step Challenge' .This Week!

This Wednesday there will be the first session of the diocesan online course on the ministry of welcome, either at 11.00 in the hall on in the evening at 7.30 by zoom. The second will be on 28<sup>th</sup> June. There is no commitment implied in coming to this course, but the more people we can engage in this important ministry the better.

We all appreciate being made welcome, and are also very conscious if at any time we are made to feel unwelcome. The mission of the Church is greatly enhanced when visitors and newcomers are made to feel welcome; all too often we can be very welcoming to the people we know, but ignore those we don't, if we are only friendly to our friends. This is not welcoming strangers.

## Next Alpha will be in the Autumn.

"Declaring Jesus Christ, risen from the dead is our most essential mission. Maybe the Lord leads us into an institutional crisis to lead us into this understanding that the proclamation of Jesus is the most essential." (Bishop Robert Barron) As Catholics, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is at the centre of our spiritual life. We recognise the importance of attending Mass, obeying the command to "do this in memory of me". We must equally obey the command to "go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News". (Mark 16:15) The present institutional crisis is manifest in several ways at this time, but the Church must never stop proclaiming the Good News. Alpha has proved to be effective in Catholic parishes throughout the world. Please be supportive of this work.

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

## The Diocesan Mission Appeal and Special Collections

As a parish we have placed mission and evangelism at the centre of our concern for many years, and Bishop David is concerned that this should be so for the diocese as a whole. In this context, mission should not be an add-on special collection; ideally it should be the first-fruits of our giving. The need for the special collection is as a result of the difficult financial position of the diocese at present.

We are transferring £1,000 to the diocese for mission, which our own budget will allow thanks to the generous response that has been made to the increased needs through last winter.

This week and next many parishes will be having the special collections to support the work of mission within the diocese, but since there is also a special collection next week (Day for Life), ours will be deferred until later in the year (23<sup>rd</sup> July).

The reality is that if the Church does not invest in evangelisation, she cannot expect to grow. There has been an assumption that the children of Catholics will be the Catholics of the future. This assumption has not been born out over the past fifty years or more, and in any case, this is not an adequate response to that command of Jesus to "go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News".

Pope Benedict continues to instruct us, at the end of Mass to: "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord". There are many ways in which this can be done, but not doing it is not an option.

## CALLED & EQUIPPED

A year-long programme, offering a foundation in Catholic teaching and a journey of faith formation. It is for anyone active in parish life or coming into ministry.

There will be two information webinars about the course on 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30 pm

Visit [www.pastoralministryoffice.org/called/](http://www.pastoralministryoffice.org/called/)

Rayner Willnecker has recently completed this programme, and would be happy to talk to anyone who might be interested in enrolling for the coming year.

## Gregory Care

*Support for refugees*

We continue to work with local churches supporting refugees and thank you to those who have donated things through us in the past.

We are now looking for:-

Suitcases, wool and knitting needles and children's bikes and helmets.

The wool and needles can be left in the Gregory Care box however if you have a bike you would like to donate please speak to one of the team so we can arrange collection and delivery.

Thank you.

Gregory Care ☎ 07434 669011