



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

We enter into the time of Lent

The Calendar of the Christian Church hangs on one day above all others, and that is the Day of the Resurrection of the Lord. This is beautifully demonstrated in the ancient proclamation of the dates of moveable feasts which by tradition was made each year at Epiphany, and is now effectively replaced by printed diaries. The proclamation says:

“Know, dear brothers and sisters that, as we have rejoiced in the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, so, by leave of God’s mercy we announce to you also the joy of his Resurrection, who is our Saviour. On the twenty-second day of February will fall Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the fast of the most sacred Lenten season. On the ninth day of April you will celebrate with joy Easter Day, the Paschal feast of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (*Roman Missal, Appendix 1*)

The proclamation then continues to list the dates of all the feasts that follow from Easter whose dates are dependent on that of Easter; Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity and Corpus Christi. Easter is the key date on which hang all the dates of other celebrations.

The date of Easter is (and has been over the centuries) a matter of discussion; and today there are those both inside the Church and outside who are pressing for a fixed date every year. This, they say, would make school term dates and spring holiday dates so much easier.

The counter-argument is that this would lose the connection we have with Passover, and if we do not understand Easter as the Christian Passover, we have completely lost the plot. It is true that Easter and Jewish Passover are not always celebrated in the same week; this is due to anomalies of the calendar, but the method of calculation, bringing together the lunar and solar calendars remains a living connection that we have with our brothers and sisters who celebrate the freedom from slavery in Egypt and we see fulfilled in the freedom from the slavery from sin fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

There is also a fundamental question of how Christianity should relate to the secular world in which we find ourselves. Our faith grew up in a society which celebrated different feasts from us, had different priorities from us, and persecuted us in many ways, including by martyrdom. Times changed, and we had our turn in determining the calendar, the feasts, the priorities, and while much good was done, we have lost the initiative, and the secular world has taken charge again. Just as in the political life of this land, there are those who would wish to wind the clock back to the British Empire, so within the Church there are those who would love to be living in the days when society was more ‘religious’; the reality is that we live in the era in which God has given us the gift of life, and it is in this era that we must live. This then requires us to consider how we should live in an era and a society that is secular, and in many ways, anti-Christian. There is no single answer to this, and each of us must respond following prayer, and guided by the Holy Spirit. The season of Lent offers us a perfect opportunity to reassess how we should live in the contemporary world.

What we must not do is dismiss the importance of the question. St Paul tells us that we must not be ‘conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.’ (*Romans 12:2*)

This chapter of the letter to the Romans offers us a guide for Lent:

- Let love be genuine.
- Avoid what is evil;
- Hold fast to what is good.
- Love one another with brotherly affection.
- Outdo one another in showing honour.
- Do not be slothful in zeal,
- Be fervent in spirit,
- Serve the Lord.
- Rejoice in hope,
- Be patient in tribulation,
- Be constant in prayer.
- Contribute to the needs of the Church
- Seek to show hospitality.
- Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.
- Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.
- Live in harmony with one another.
- Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.
- Never be wise in your own sight.
- Repay no one evil for evil
- Give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all.
- If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

This could be a daily check-list for Lent, and a daily examination of conscience. It can also be seen as a way of living attractively in a secular world without becoming conformed to it.

We speak of the ‘Lenten Fast’, but while the Church asks us to observe Ash Wednesday and Good Friday as particular days of fasting, and encourages us to fast on the Fridays of Lent in particular, we should avoid the trap of thinking that Lent is primarily about ‘giving up’. It is primarily about moving forward. This must involve letting go of that which holds us back, but this is the means to an end, the purpose is to grow towards God and in obedience to his will.

Lent is not, first of all, about ‘me’; it is about God, and the first Lenten precept is of prayer. It is not about me, it is about other people, and a further precept is to do with almsgiving - giving for the needs of the poor. Even the precept of fasting is not about me, it is about not putting my appetites and desires first, but putting God and others before me.

In three weeks the parish begins its next Alpha Course, and by now it will be hoped that there have been many enquiries and people signed up to go. There may well still be a need for offers of people to help in a variety of ways. This is a way of showing the attractive face of the Church to those outside, and respond to many of the items in that list from Romans chapter 12.

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.

Christopher Williams RIP: Longstanding members of the Parish will remember Chris, going back to the time when he was an Altar Server. His mother, Bridie, was a faithful worker in St. Gregory's from when we had the wooden Church in what is now the car park. Sadly, Chris died on 10th February, having suffered a heart attack. He was 72 years old and died in Thailand, where he had been living for a number of years.

There is a long waiting list for Masses at the moment, but Mass will be said for the repose of his soul at 9am on Tuesday 30th May 2023

CAFOD Syria-Turkey Earthquake Appeal: Thank you so much for your very generous response to the emergency retiring collection last Sunday. This raised £2081.93 towards CAFOD's relief work in the affected areas – a tremendous response! According to CAFOD, over a million pounds has been donated so far, and is still coming in. For more details visit CAFOD's Syria Turkey Emergency Appeal online at <https://cafod.org.uk/give>.

The Good Shepherd Company, Holy Land: The Good Shepherd Company from the Holy land (Bethlehem), which is based in Nottingham, will be in the Hall next Sunday after both Masses. Their goal is to support and help the Christian families in the holy land to stay at work as olive wood carving is one of the most important sources of income for them - 90% of the Christians rely on this crafting. So selling their produce here on their behalf, will help to prevent the Christian community from leaving the country in search of better work opportunities; a test survey from the bishops of Jerusalem shows that there are only forty one thousand Christians left in the area.

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

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

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.

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**

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.

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.

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 or <https://northamptondiocese.org/courses/encounter-northampton/>

Choir notes: the choir will be in attendance at the evening Mass on Ash Wednesday 22 Feb. After Mass, there will be a practice finishing at 9 pm at the latest. This will concentrate on aspects of this year's Holy Week programme. The next practice will again be after Thursday evening Mass on 2 March. If other practices are needed I will let people know. *Alec*

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be reported here shortly. 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 19th February 2023, 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Leviticus, meaning “he called”, is about holiness, the utter separateness of God. We are each called to become whole, like a jigsaw with all the parts fitting together perfectly. Hence “You shall be holy, because I, the Lord, am holy”. The book expands the basic commandments, insisting on concern for our neighbour, the sacredness of sex, the marriage laws, and forbidding aberrant sexual behaviour. Thus the Israelites are to keep themselves in a state of wholeness, as a sign of their intimate union with the Holy Lord.

The psalm is a hymn of grateful praise to God, whose mercy is great because he knows man's frailty.

Paul is critical of the Corinthians, telling them they were not mature enough to be given the solid food of spiritual instruction, because they were still jealously quarrelling among themselves about who to follow. They must follow only Christ, obeying

God's rules, even though this will be seen as foolishness by the wisdom of this world.

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus continues drawing out the meaning of the Commandments in the Sermon on the Mount. Last week the shorter form omitted the difficult teachings forbidding divorce and calling our brother a fool. Today we are urged to love our enemies. Always Jesus pushes us further, urging us towards perfection, in union with our heavenly Father.

Psalm Response:

The Lord is compassion and love.

(Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18; Psalm 102; 1 Corinthians 3:16-23; Matthew 5:38-48)

Chris Oliver

Alpha beginning on March 14th 2023

The dates of the next Alpha Course are in the next column, and we are hoping that by ending in mid-June before the holiday season starts, many people will be able to attend. Everyone will be given a ‘plus one’ invitation; that is, please come and bring a friend. All offers of help are welcome; if you can help, please speak to one of the Alpha Team, who can be identified by their badge on a lanyard.

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!

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| 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? |

Syria-Turkey Earthquake Appeal

CAFOD thanks you all very much for your response to the appeal for prayers and donations to those affected. It is thanks to your help with Family Fast Day collections and other fundraising for CAFOD that they have made an immediate initial allocation of £100,000 that they made urgent humanitarian support-food, water, shelter, medical assistance and winter kits. It is due to support for CAFOD throughout the year that 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>. Over a million pounds has been donated so far!

It is in the last few years that CAFOD has shared the news of extreme hunger caused by war and draughts as well as emergencies caused by climate change.

As we approach Lent and Family Fast Day, CAFOD is organising **The Big Lent Walk** to raise funds to relieve poverty and combat global warming. It is through your help with these funds that they have been able to respond quickly to the terrible earthquake in Syria and Turkey.

Kevin and Aideen Fogarty have signed up to do the Walk. We will together walk 200K in 40 days

We hope you will sponsor us in this effort. S sponsorship form will be available at the back of the Church, or you can go online to donate at <https://cafod.org.uk/give>

Thank you all so very much for your generosity!