



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

An Apostle in the Apostolic Church

The Second Vatican Council was the most important event for the Church; the most obvious impact it has had for us is the manner in which we celebrate Mass, and tragically, that has become a subject of division within the Church. The Mass is the Mass whatever language it is celebrated in; it is the Mass whichever way the priest faces and what matters is that the Mass is celebrated and that we worship God and obey his command to ‘do this in memory’ of Jesus.

Last week Pope Francis pointed us towards some of the other fruits of the Council, the Decree on Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes*), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, (*Gaudium et Spes*) and the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*). These are vital documents from the Council, and each of them deserve to be studied in greater detail. It is a matter of sorrow that for nearly 60 years they have not been given the importance that they deserve.

This week we are invited to look at another of the documents of the Council, the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*). The first chapter of this document is entitled ‘The Vocation of the Laity to the Apostolate’, and Pope Francis quoted directly from it:

The Council says: “the Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate” (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §2). It is a calling that is common, just as “a common dignity [is shared] as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity” (*Lumen gentium*, §32).

When we think of ‘Apostles’ we first and most naturally think of the twelve who were chosen by Jesus. We then also give the name ‘Apostle’ to the first missionaries to particular places or people; St Patrick, Apostle to Ireland, St Augustine, Apostle to Kent or St Vincent de Paul, Apostle to the Poor. We think of bishops as successors of the Apostles, but we need to think wider than that.

Are we aware that being apostles concerns every Christian? Are we aware that it concerns each one of us? Indeed, we are required to be apostles – that is, envoys – in a Church that, in the Creed, we profess as *apostolic*.

The first Apostles were given that ‘great commission’ to proclaim the Good News, and travelled all over the world to fulfil that commission; their Mission. Our calling may not be to travel, but it is to proclaim the Good News. The Council speaks of being an apostle (the apostolate) as being the ‘vocation’ of **all** Christians.

All too often we restrict the idea of vocation to specific ministries in the Church (Priesthood, Diaconate, Religious Life). There are many ministries to which some are called; recently the Church has formally re-instated the ministries of Reader and Acolyte, but the ministry to the sick and housebound, the ministries welcome and hospitality, the ministry of music, the ministry of Altar Servers, the ministry of the care of the building, the ministry of the washing the linen used at Mass — these are all callings — vocations.

All these vocations come from God; they are gifts from his infinite grace, just as is the ‘universal vocation to holiness’ (*see Lumen Gentium* §5). So too, the vocation to the apostolate is a universal vocation; it belongs to all the Baptised.

It is a call that concerns both those who have received the sacrament of Orders, consecrated persons, and all lay faithful, man or woman: it is a call to all. You, the treasure you have received with your Christian vocation, are obliged to give it: it is the dynamic nature of the vocation, the dynamic nature of life. It is a call that empowers them to actively and creatively perform their apostolic task, within a Church in which “there is a diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission. Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity too: all of you, the majority of you are laypeople. The laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world” (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §2).

It is no accident that this theme which Pope Francis is emphasising comes at the time when the Church is also seeking to become more ‘synodal’ — that is to say, all the faithful working together, laity and clergy, in the service of the Gospel. The working out of the vocation to the apostolate which all Christians share is one which must be done as the Church. This follows on from the message of last week, that Evangelisation is a work of the Church.

The exact form of each person’s vocation to the apostolate is many and varied, and Pope Francis is keen to stress that none is more important than another. There is no ‘career structure’ in the apostolate

There is that embarrassing event which is recorded in St Matthew’s Gospel of the mother of James and John asking Jesus for a specially honoured place in heaven for her sons. Jesus is gentle in his rebuke, but none the less, it is a rebuke to her, and he explains that ministry in the Church is a ministry of service, not of promotion, “just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (*Matthew 20:28*)

Pope Francis invites us to talk to one another, and more importantly, to listen to one another so that we all may better understand how we may live out our Baptismal vocation; how we may live our way of being apostles in an apostolic Church, which is at the service of others.

Last week we also heard the pastoral letter of Bishop David, in which he spoke of parishes becoming ‘missionary communities, sharing the witness of their faith with others’. This is not a new message for us. Today’s Gospel tells of Jesus opening the eyes of the man born blind. We are called, as missionary disciples, to bring the vision of Jesus to the eyes of those who have not yet seen.

Indented paragraphs are quoted from the Papal Audience of 15th March 2023

Notices of Interest

Repository: The Repository is open after every Sunday Mass wherever possible! Easter Cards and Easter Mass Bouquet Cards. 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 Diaries available.

Grief to Grace: Grief to Grace is a specialised 5 day residential programme of spiritual & psychological healing for anyone who has suffered sexual, physical, emotional or spiritual abuse in childhood, adolescence or adulthood, including those who are the victims of rape, incest or abuse by a member of the clergy. For details please see www.griegtograceuk.org, email info@griegtograceuk.org, contact 02081542719 or see posters in the Narthex.

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

24 Hours with the Lord: There will be 24-hour Adoration at the Diocesan Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. Adoration will start after the 10.30am Mass **on Friday 24th March** and will conclude with 9.30am Mass on Saturday 25th March, the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord.. If you can commit to an hour, please phone Gillian on 07724337202, if you can't commit just come along. Thank you.

Missio/Red Box: Father Andrew rightly complimented us for our generosity towards a number of charities. The last Missio list put St Gregory's top parish in our diocese. Times are hard, but this makes your sharing with others all the more praiseworthy. Your prayers are invaluable. Envelopes containing the latest Missio magazine are available, in alphabetical order, on the table by the confessionals. I have left some spares for any new participants. *Alec*

Thomas Becket Catholic School have a number of job vacancies, please look on their website for details.

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

Thomas Becket School Open Evening: Tues. 28th March 4pm – 5.30pm. Please book via Eventbrite or contact the school on 01604 493211.

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.

Stations of the Cross: Malcolm Arnold Academy students will be taking to the stage to share a moving and powerful depiction of the Stations of the Cross. The performance will be at **St Gregory's Church at 6pm on Monday 27th March** (lasting approx. an hour). It is FREE to all.

Church Heating: Weekday Mass and Thursday adoration is in the Sacristy. We heat the church and hall on Sundays, but the extra cost of this will be more than the saving on weekdays.

Northampton Catholic Schools Lenten Reflection: Wednesday 22nd March at 5pm at the Cathedral. You are invited to join pupils from the Northampton Catholic Schools on their Lenten journey: take time to be with Jesus to relieve His suffering through the eyes of our young people in reflection, prayer and music.

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.

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/>

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be on Monday 27th March 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: 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.

Choir notes: starting March 18, we need to have a very short practice (10 min max) after 11:00 Mass on each of the remaining Sundays of Lent to perfect a couple of tricky bits for Holy Week. *Alec*

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)**

Diocesan Employment Opportunities:

1. Fundraising Manager, 40 hours per week, Start date: April 2023. We are currently recruiting for an experienced Fundraising Manager to lead the development and delivery of the diocesan fundraising plan with the principle aim of proactively securing growth of income from charitable trusts, foundations and grant giving bodies. Full information for the position and an application form can be found by visiting <https://northamptondiocese.org/job/fundraising-manager/> All candidates should complete an application form and email it to hr.admin@northamptondiocese.org

2. Diocesan Information Manager, 3 days per week, Start date: May 2023. We are currently recruiting for an Information Manager to join our Diocese. Full information for the position and an application form can be found by visiting <https://northamptondiocese.org/jobs/> All candidates should complete an application form and email it to hr.admin@northamptondiocese.org The closing date for applications will be Friday 31st March. Interviews dates to be confirmed.

3. Pastoral Ministry Office Administrator, 10 hours per week Start date: To be confirmed. We are currently recruiting for an administrator to provide communication events & administrative support for the Office for Synodality and the Pastoral Ministry Office on a temporary contract for 2 years. Information & an application form can be found at <https://northamptondiocese.org/job/pastoral-ministry-office-administrator/> All candidates should complete an application form and email it to hr.admin@northamptondiocese.org

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 March 2020, 4th Sunday in Lent, Year A

Before our first reading King Saul had disobeyed God's instructions by allowing animals from his defeated enemy to be sacrificed to the Lord. He put more faith in ceremony and ritual than he did in the Lord. Samuel told Saul obedience is more important than holocausts, and that the Lord has rejected Saul as king of Israel. The Lord sends Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as king.

The psalm celebrates God's loving care for his people, like a shepherd guarding and guiding his flock, and looking forward to his generous end-time feast.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is centred on the Church as Christ's body, with a mission to make God's plan of salvation known throughout the world. Christians must "be like children of light, for the effects of the light are seen in goodness, right living and truth".

John's dramatic gospel readings continue with the healing of the man born blind, who, at first, appears to take little interest. His parents distance themselves out of fear, echoing the growing separation between Jews and Christians by John's time. But for John, just seeing is not enough, the light of faith is essential. So Jesus seeks the man out and gradually leads him to full belief, and so to worship him.

Psalm Response:

**The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.**

(1 Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13; Psalm 22(23); Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41)

Chris Oliver

Alpha began on March 14th 2023

Alpha has now begun, and there was a happy gathering of people last week. There were a few who could not be there because of sickness — do not worry, please come when you can! The first session invites us to look at the hollowness of the secular life and the futility of a life without God. "It is vanity, says the preacher" (*Ecclesiastes 1:2*). "Is there more to life than this?" asks Alpha, and the clear answer is 'Yes' when that life is lived with God. God is made flesh in Jesus, and so this week we are invited to get to know God through knowing Jesus.

First session:	March 14 th 2023:	Is there more to life than this?
Second Session:	March 21 st 2023:	Who is Jesus?
Third Session:	March 28 th 2023	Why did Jesus die?
Fourth Session:	April 18 th 2023:	How can I have faith?
Fifth Session:	April 25 th 2023:	Why and how do I pray?
Sixth Session:	May 2 nd 2023:	Why and how should I read the Bible?
Seventh Session:	May 9 th 2023:	How does God guide us?
Away-Day:	May 12 th /13 th 2023	Who is the Holy Spirit?
Eighth Session:	May 16 th 2023:	How can I resist evil?
Ninth Session:	May 23 rd 2023:	Why and how should I tell others?
Tenth Session:	June 6 th 2023:	Does God heal today?
Eleventh Session:	June 13 th 2023:	What about the Church?

Gregory Care

Save the Date

Bank Holiday Monday, 8th May
from 12 noon at St Gregory's.

Planning is in full swing for the
Coronation Big Lunch.

We hope many of you can join in this
community celebration.

More details to follow, so watch this
space.



Passover Meal

We have the opportunity to
experience the Passover Meal in a
Christian context, and interpreted for
us so that we can understand the
significance of the particular
symbols of the Jewish Seder Meal
and through it, better understand the
liturgy of Maundy Thursday, the
Mass of the Lord's Supper

This will be on Wednesday in Holy
Week, 5th April, starting at 6.45 pm.

There is a charge for adults of £12;
children are free. Tickets available
soon, or see Rayner Willnecker.

Generous support

Thank you all so very much for your
generosity towards CAFOD, in
sponsoring Kevin and Aideen, **who have
now walked at total of 135k**, at the Lent
Fast Day collection in your weekly fast
day giving and in you gifts throughout the
year. The CAFOD box at the back of the
church available every day.

Thank you too for your support for
Gregory Care. Please continue to give
toiletries for the Cathedral Foodstore.

Mothering Sunday — Laetare Sunday

The first word of the Entrance Antiphon of today's Mass in Latin is 'laetare', meaning 'rejoice'. It is a quotation from Isaiah: "Rejoice, Jerusalem and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast" (*Isaiah 66:10*). In the lectionary before Vatican II, the Mass included the reading from the letter to the Galatians that says: "Sinai . . . represents Jerusalem in its present state . . . but the Jerusalem above is free and that is the one that is our mother" (*Galatians 4:25-26*). It is from this link that this Sunday came to be known as Mothering Sunday.

It may seem odd to rejoice in the middle of Lent, but every Sunday is the Easter of the week, and we rejoice in the resurrection even as we prepare to commemorate the passion of Our Lord. We never forget that the passion and cross led on to the glory of the Resurrection.

We rejoice too in our earthly mother who brought us to life, we rejoice in Holy Mother Church, through whom God sustains us with his Sacraments and through his teaching, and we rejoice in the Mother of Jesus who intercedes for us.

We rejoice that we are so blessed by God with these three mothers.