



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 personal “Thank you”

The last 25 years have really shot by — it is hard to believe that it is actually a quarter of a century since Bishop Leo ordained me to the Priesthood in the Catholic Church.

My first ‘thank-you’ must be to the Church as a whole for the wonderful welcome that Carole and I, Anna and Theresa have received. This was first shown by Bishop Leo, and in his many acts of kindness to us. Fr Damian at Great Billing, the parish in which we were living at the time could not have been more welcoming and friendly.

I am aware that in many ways those who came from the Church of England represented a challenge to some in the Catholic Church. To some we were seen as dangerous conservatives who were resistant to any change. Others saw those who were married as bringing dangerous revolution into the Church. I can honestly say that neither of these represented my intentions, and although some received me with caution, the welcome given was sincere and gracious.

My love of Catholicism goes back to my school-days, and if I had not discovered that part of the Church of England in which the Catholic Faith was taught and practiced, I would probably have become a Catholic much sooner. I found in Catholic worship an activity that engaged the whole self, whereas the version of Anglicanism to which I had been previously exposed chiefly engaged the brain; the high-point of that liturgy was the sermon and acts of God in Sacramental form played only a small part.

It could now be argued that those of us who lived in that ‘Anglo-Catholic’ world were living in a fantasy, but at the time one of the most exciting things going on in the Church was ecumenism, and specifically for the Church of England, the ‘Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission’. There seemed to be a real hope that some sort of unity, or, at least, a route towards unity could be found. Alas, while we thought that the Anglican Communion was entering this in genuine sincerity, there was another part of the Church of England that was determined that this unity should not happen.

It was in those heady days of ecumenism that I was able to make my first visit to Rome, and as an Anglican, to gain a seat near the front of the audience hall to see Pope Paul VI. This was one of those mile-stones on my road to Rome. I was surrounded by people of every language and ethnicity and from every part of the world. At the end of the audience, we were all invited to sing the Creed (in Latin). This had not been part of my culture, but I was acutely aware that everyone else was singing with gusto, and that all languages were united in this statement of faith. I was so aware that while I shared the faith, I was not part of this Church which was not the Church of any one country or nation, but was truly Catholic — universal.

In my Anglican ministry I sought to promote unity with the Catholic Church. When I left Kent, I was given a copy of the Jerome Bible Commentary by the local Catholic community. When I arrived in Northampton, I was horrified to read that a local Anglican vicar had refused to allow a Catholic priest to continue using the Anglican church in that village as a Mass centre, and my first visit was to Canon Diamond at Billing to express my sadness and to offer him, should he want it, use of any of churches of which I was vicar.

All this came to a head in the early 1990s when the Church of England made the decision to change part of what was the historic legacy from before its separation from Rome by allowing the ordination of women to the priesthood. The real issue was that this was an obstacle to unity; I could not see the fulfilment of the hope in my lifetime, and therefore I had to make the journey on my own. With Carole’s encouragement, I telephoned Bishop Leo, and so began the next phase of my life.

There is much more that could be told about the process that led to 2nd January 1988, when Bishop Leo ordained me as a priest of the Diocese of Northampton in St Joseph’s, Bedford, and then when in 2002 Bishop Kevin McDonald appointed me to St Gregory’s in Northampton.

Although not without incident, such as the occasion when the Universe printed the notice of my death and caused a degree of consternation, these have been 25 wonderful years, and I thank God for bringing me home to the Catholic Church and to this wonderful parish. Please join me at 7.00pm on Monday evening for the Mass of thanksgiving.

More Thanks

Every Christmas and Easter the people of St Gregory’s are so very generous in their gifts, both through the collection and otherwise to their priest. This generosity is not limited to these times, and I am so very

grateful for the kindness and love that you show to me and my family. In particular, since my expedition to hospital before Christmas, your prayers, encouragement and support have been most appreciated.

Please pray for the soul of Alice King who died on Boxing Day. Funeral arrangements to follow. May she rest in peace.

Notices of Interest

Bible Alive for January 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: I would like to give heartfelt "thank you" to the very small band of devoted helpers. Some of you may have noticed we have not been able to cover all Masses this year as there has been a limited response to my pleas for more help. None of us is getting any younger and it would be a shame if this service has to be curtailed. It requires only a few minutes after Mass and all stock is clearly marked. *Kathleen Healey*. PS There are still some Church Art Calendars and Diaries available.

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.

Lorna Heron & family express their heartfelt thanks to everyone who showed support of any kind during our difficult time of bereavement. I especially thank the Alpha Team & all those who provided their time & food to make the Wake such a success. I know there were hundreds of cups of tea/coffee etc to provide throughout the day! I also thank all those involved in the music & the choir. It couldn't have gone better. Everyone pulled together and did dear Richard proud. A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL

Residential for all in Year 7-Year 13: NYMO are once again running our annual LUX weekend from 3rd-5th Feb. The weekend is packed full of fun activities, moving times of prayer and inspirational talks. Come and join around 100 other young people from all parts of the diocese for an unforgettable weekend! For more information and to book a place check out our website www.nymo.org/lux

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

Tots @ St Gregory's: Re-starts 10th January: tots and their carers welcome, 9.30-11.30 on Tuesdays during term-time £1 per adult!!

Change of Date: Now Saturday 25th March 2023 Encounter Northampton, a day hosted by Mission Northampton in St Gregory's Hall from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. More details later!

Choir Matters: Due to lack of heating, instead of our customary monthly practice on the 1st Thursday of the month, I intend to use as long or short a time as is necessary after 11am Mass on the first Sunday of the month. The aim is that the choir are prepared for what is planned in the month ahead. Despite similar difficulties beforehand, the choir did a remarkable job at Christmas - "the best ever" said Father Andrew. I thank the choir for that, especially those who were there at both Midnight & Morning Masses. I often receive comments of appreciation from members of congregation; this encourages us to continue our supportive role. The male section of the choir is particularly strong at the moment whereas the number of ladies has suffered recently; new members are welcome – the men would like to see more ladies, but that is nothing new. *Alec*

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**

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.

A course on the Psalms: It is sub-titled "The School of Prayer", with the invitation to 'learn to pray like Christ'. The course will continue for three more sessions after Christmas; on 4th, 18th and 25th January.

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

The God who Speaks: The 'Year of the Word' continues and the Diocesan Bible Study sessions for the Sunday Mass readings are continuing. On January 18th there will be an introduction to the Year of Matthew (Year A in the lectionary)

400th Anniversary of the death of St Francis de Sales

Pope Francis has issued a new Apostolic Letter to commemorate the 4th centenary of the death of St Francis de Sales 'Totum amoris est'. He sees the spirituality of St Francis de Sales as particularly relevant in our day as, just as now, 400 years ago the world was undergoing great change, and he saw this as a vital time to proclaim the Gospel, and to find new ways to do this. "We are challenged to be a Church that is outward-looking and free of all worldliness, even as we live in this world, share people's lives and journey with them in attentive listening and acceptance. That is what Francis de Sales did when he discerned the events of his times with the help of God's grace. Today he bids us set aside undue concern for ourselves, for our structures and for what society thinks about us, and consider instead the real spiritual needs and expectations of our people."

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be on Monday 16th Jan 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.

St Gregory's Brownies: St Gregory's has a Brownie Unit who meet in the hall on Wednesday evenings. We have some spaces due to some of our girls going up to Guides and would love to meet some new prospective Brownies. We are all aged between 7 and 10 years. Please get in touch with the leaders on tw.lewis@ntlworld.com for more information or a little chat.

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: All donations given now from after Sunday Mass will be given to the Hope Centre, & added to offerings made at the crib. This will continue through Christmastide up to & including January 8th (Feast of the Baptism of the Lord). Last year we were able to send just over £1,500. So far, donations through Advent have raised just over £100.

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 1st January 2022 Mary Mother of God, Year A.

The Book of Numbers continues the story of the Israelites during their exodus journey from Mount Sinai until they arrive outside the Promised Land before 1200 BC. It includes this beautiful form of blessing given to Moses by the Lord, one of the oldest and finest pieces of ancient poetry. To “bless” means to pour out the power of life that produces growth, success, fertility and prosperity.

The Psalm calls on all peoples to recognise and praise the one Lord, who gives us so many gifts.

Paul wrote this angry and anguished appeal to the Galatians not to forsake the gospel he had taught them. Others were saying that Gentiles had to become Jews to be fully Christian. No, says Paul. The Jewish Law was a temporary disciplinarian needed until humanity was mature enough to join God’s family. This is now

possible through the faith of, and our faith in, God’s Son, who was born of a woman and so fully human.

In Luke’s Gospel the coming birth of Jesus was announced to Mary by the Angel Gabriel. She accepted what God wanted of her, but was still a virgin when Jesus was born. So she may have been much helped to understand this strange event by the coming of these shepherds, who confirmed that her son was “Messiah and Lord”.

Psalm Response: **O God, be gracious and bless us.**
(Numbers 6:22-26; Psalm 66(67); Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21)

Chris Oliver

Warm Welcome

St Gregory’s hall has been offering a warm welcome since the cold weather began a few weeks ago, and we have been given a generous donation of food for anyone who comes. We are one of a number of places in the neighbourhood which are offering a place which is heated and providing food and welcome; between them all there is welcome throughout the week.

Each house that is heated is not only using up the energy supply which is not unlimited, and if the weather turns colder again (which is likely) there is a risk of power cuts, but also is generating greenhouse gasses which

contribute to our carbon footprint, and add to climate change. Taking advantage of the ‘warm welcome’ not only saves money; it also helps save the planet!

There are children’s toys, and we now have a Wi-Fi provision for any who are working ‘from home’, and continuous provision of tea, coffee and soft drinks. Please do make use of this facility.

Net Ministries — Scotland



The reality is that our youth today are growing up in a largely post-Christian culture, making the task of instilling faith in teenagers all the more difficult for parents, catechists, and youth ministers.

A vast majority of Catholic youth are disconnecting from the Church during their teenage years. Something clearly isn’t working.

At NET Ministries, we’re passionate about challenging young Catholics to love Christ and embrace the life of the Church.

That’s why, working alongside youth ministers, parishes, and schools, we help young people encounter the person of Christ through evangelization and discipleship.

We believe the proclamation of the Gospel message has the power to transform lives and save souls, and that an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ is the only thing that brings humans a life of fulfilment and joy – in this life and the next.

We believe in the importance of fidelity to the whole of Catholic teaching.

We believe we are living in a new Apostolic Age in which people, but especially young people, are in need now more than ever of the hope and faithful promise found in Christ and through the universal community of the Church.