



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

Just as we do not just pray for peace on one Sunday a year, neither do we read the Word of God on just one Sunday of the year. Indeed, we read the Scriptures every day. This is a vital part of our Catholic Christian life.

The word ‘vital’ literally means ‘life-giving’. Through the Word of God all things came into being, and the Word of God in Holy Scripture is the God-breathed inspiration for our daily life.

Over the years of history some have tried to suggest that Catholics do not love the Bible — sadly some Catholics have believed this slur! In both the pre-Vatican II Missal and the present one, all the prayers and texts are rooted in the Scriptures,

many of them contain direct quotations. Every Mass has at least two readings from the Bible, and Catholics have always been encouraged to study the Scriptures. In the days when many people could not read and before the wide availability of books, the Church provided the people with Bible stories painted on the walls of churches or in stained glass windows. Ironically, the very people who wanted to give even greater access to the Bible were the people who white-washed over the paintings and smashed the windows.

The Word comes to life most fruitfully when it is proclaimed, not just read. While private reading and study of the Scriptures is important, it is the proclamation of the Word that forms an important part of our celebration of Mass.

Sunday of the Word of God
January 21, 2024

«REMAIN IN MY WORD»
(JN 8,31)

Therefore the commissioning of those who proclaim the Word is an important event in the life of the Church, and this happens every year on this Sunday.

Those who proclaim the Word are not commissioned for life like those who are ordained. This is not because their ministry is less important, it is so that new proclaimers can be encouraged and older ones can retire.

There are two essential qualifications for those who proclaim the Scriptures in church. The first is that they can be heard, and the second is that they can be understood. However, there is a third qualification which is not connected to the first two. This is that, because they are seen as trusted people with a ministry, their manner of life must be appropriate to the ministry they

are fulfilling. It is the way we live that is the loudest and most obvious proclamation of the Gospel.

The 3.00 pm Liturgy of the Word in the Cathedral this Sunday is the Diocesan commissioning of those who proclaim the Word of God at Mass, and all who have this ministry, together with their families are invited to be there, where the Bishop will commission them. However, there will be some who cannot get there. This is particularly true for those from parishes a long way from Northampton, but may be true for some from our parish, even though we are the nearest! Therefore there will be commissioning at both Masses today for any unable to be at the Cathedral this-afternoon, although you can be at both! ..

24 Days until Ash Wednesday!

Easter falls quite early this year; Ash Wednesday is on 14th February. The day before is Shrove Tuesday (‘Mardi Gras’), a day for ‘Carnival’ (literally, ‘good bye to meat’ before Lent), probably a more suitable day for ‘Valentines’ celebrations: pancakes and red roses!

Friday Stations of the Cross

18 th February	St Gregory’s
25 th February	St Matthew’s
3 rd March	St Gregory’s
10 th March	St Matthew’s
17 th March	St Gregory’s
24 th March	St Matthew’s

Among the Lent activities, there will be Station of the Cross, shared with St Matthew’s on Friday evenings at 7.30.

There will also be Stations of the Cross each Sunday at 2.30 pm in St Gregory’s.

There will be other Lent resources, particularly on prayer which will be announced soon.

Notices of Interest

Repository: The Repository is open after Sunday Masses for the sale of cards and religious goods. We still need more helpers especially after 9am Mass. I want to express a huge thank you to the loyal band who make the whole enterprise possible! Any queries or volunteers to 01604 629103 or Kath.healey.789@gmail.com

Hope Centre: 50th Anniversary Big Sleepout! Saturday 3rd Feb. @ Northampton College, Lower Mounts Campus. Siobhan O'Donovan & Lorna Heron will be sleeping out again this year to raise much needed money for the homeless. There are sponsorship forms at both doors if you wish to sponsor them. They also have a fundraising page if you wish to donate online – just ask for details! Thanking you all in advance for your support and generosity. *Siobhan and Lorna*

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.

Diocesan Bible Study: Wednesday 31st January at 7.30 pm, by Zoom on the Scripture Readings for the Sundays of Lent. The link will be sent to those who have previously attended, others are asked to email to Fr Andrew who will send it to you.

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.

Found: A rather nice Rosary in a cloth pouch. If you think it's yours, please see Caryll in the office, or phone her on the church number (option 1), Monday, Wednesday or Friday mornings.

Choir Notes: the next practice will be Saturday morning 11-12:30 on Feb 3. *Alec*

The Secrets of St Paul: A 10 week course on Zoom run by Mission Northampton, starting on Wednesday 10th January 2024 and running until Wednesday 27th March 2024, 7.30-9.00 pm. (Break for Ash Wednesday & half term: Wednesday 14th & 21st February). Book at: <https://northamptondiocese.org/courses/secrets-of-paul-online>

Donorbox: St. Gregory's has now signed up with Donorbox to enable people to make donations to the Church via a QR code

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!



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.

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).

Church Cleaning: Helpers are needed to clean the Church on the last Saturday of every month (**next - Saturday 27th January 2024**), after the morning Mass. All welcome, especially younger, more energetic ones!

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 Hall, from 10am-12 pm.

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 26th February 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.

Refreshment Donations:

Below is the schedule for refreshment donations through the year:

From the first Sunday in Advent	The Hope Centre
to the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord:	
From the Second Sunday in ordinary time	Gregory Care
to the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday:	
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

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

Sunday 21st January: The 3rd Sunday of the Year, Year B

In the short book of Jonah, God sent a great fish to force Jonah back to the mission God had given him, to warn Nineveh that it was to be destroyed. But, after the fish had spewed Jonah back on to dry land, Jonah was still angry that God relented. He had run away to avoid drawing God's mercy on the hated city, believing only Jews were worthy of God's mercy.

After praying for pardon, the Psalm meditates on God's goodness towards the just.

Responding to questions from the Corinthians about married life, Paul gives detailed advice – but against the background of expecting Jesus to return in glory virtually any minute. There may also have been a famine when he was writing. They should not be alarmed by

any current world crisis, even if normal activities are interrupted for a time. But one day the world will end. What will matter then is their faithfulness to the Lord, whatever their social circumstances.

Last week we heard from the Gospel of John about Jesus calling the first disciples. Our year B readings from the Gospel of Mark now resume until Lent, then continuing after Trinity Sunday. Mark describes Jesus beginning his ministry by first proclaiming the Good News, and then also calling the first disciples.

Psalm Response:

Lord, make me know your ways.

(Jonah 3: 1-5, 10; Psalm 24(25): 4-9; 1 Cor 7: 29-31; Mark 1: 14-20)

Chris Oliver

The Prayer of Jesus *(Pope Francis)*

The beginning of Jesus' public ministry takes place with his baptism in the River Jordan. The Evangelists are in agreement in attributing fundamental importance to this episode. They narrate how all the people came together in prayer, and specify that this gathering had a clearly penitential nature (cf. *Mk 1:5; Mt 3:8*). The people went to John to be baptized, for the forgiveness of sins: it is of a penitential character, of conversion.

Jesus' first public act is therefore participation in a choral prayer of the people, a prayer of the people who went to be baptized, a penitential prayer, in which everyone recognizes him or herself as a sinner. This is why the Baptist wishes to oppose it, and says: "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (*Mt 3:14*). The Baptist understands who Jesus is. But Jesus insists: His is an act of obedience to the will of the Father (v. 15), an act of solidarity with our human condition. He prays with the sinners of the People of God. Let us keep this clearly in mind: Jesus is the Righteous One; he is not a sinner. But he wished to come down to us, sinners, and he prays with us, and when we pray he is with us, praying; he is with us because he is in heaven, praying for us.

Jesus always prays with his people, he always prays with us: always. We never pray alone; we always pray with Jesus. He does not stay on the opposite side of the river — "I am righteous, you are sinners" — to mark his difference and distance from the disobedient people, but rather he immerses his feet in the same purifying waters. He acts as if he were a sinner. And this is the greatness of God, who sent his Son and annihilated himself, and appeared as a sinner.

Jesus is not a distant God, and he cannot be so. Incarnation revealed him in a complete and humanly unthinkable way. Thus, inaugurating his mission, Jesus places himself at the forefront of a people of penitents, as if charging himself with opening a breach through which all of us, after him, must have the courage to pass. However, the road, the journey, is difficult; but he goes ahead, opening the way.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains that this is the newness of the fullness of time. It says: "his filial prayer, which the Father awaits from his children, is finally going to be lived out by the only Son in his humanity, with and for men" (no. 2599). Jesus prays with us. Let us keep this clear in our mind and in our heart: Jesus prays with us.

On that day, on the bank of the River Jordan, there is therefore all of humanity, with its unexpressed yearning for prayer. There is, above all, the population of sinners: those who thought they could not be loved by God, those who did not dare cross the threshold of the temple, those who did not pray because they did not consider themselves worthy. Jesus came for everyone, even for them, and he begins precisely by joining them. At the forefront.

The Gospel of Luke, in particular, highlights the climate of prayer in which the baptism of Jesus took place: "Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened" (3:21). By praying, Jesus opens the door to the heavens, and the Holy Spirit descends from that breach. And from on high a voice proclaims the wonderful truth: "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased" (v. 22). This simple phrase encloses an immense treasure; it enables us to intuit something of Jesus' ministry and of his heart, always turned to the Father. In the whirlwind of life and the world

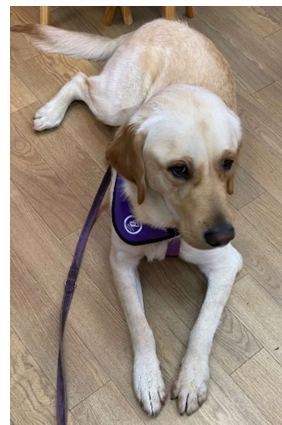
that will come to condemn him, even in the hardest and most sorrowful experiences he will have to endure, even when he experiences that he has no place to lay his head (cf. *Mt 8:20*), even when hatred and persecution are unleashed around him, Jesus is never without the refuge of a dwelling place: he dwells eternally in the Father.

This is the unique greatness of Jesus' prayer: the Holy Spirit takes possession of his person and the voice of the Father attests that he is the beloved, the Son in whom he fully reflects himself.

This prayer of Jesus, which on the banks of the River Jordan is totally personal — and will be thus for all his earthly life — in Pentecost becomes the grace of prayer for all those baptized in Christ. He himself obtained this gift for us, and he invites us to pray as he prayed.

Therefore, if during an evening of prayer we feel sluggish and empty, if it seems to us that life has been completely useless, we must at that moment beg that Jesus' prayer also become our own. "I cannot pray today, I don't know what to do: I don't feel like it, I am unworthy". In that moment, it is necessary to entrust ourselves to him so that he may pray for us. In this moment he is before the Father, praying for us; he is the intercessor; he shows the wounds to the Father, for us. Let us trust in this! If we are trustful, we will then hear a voice from heaven, louder than the voice rising from the depths of ourselves, and we will hear this voice whispering words of tenderness: "You are God's beloved, you are a son, you are the joy of the Father in heaven". Precisely for us, for each one of us, echoes the word of the Father: even if we were rejected by all, sinners of the worst kind. Jesus did not descend into the waters of the Jordan for himself, but for all of us. It was the entire People of God who went to the Jordan to pray, to ask for forgiveness, to receive that baptism of penance. And as that theologian said, they approached the Jordan with a "bare soul and bare feet". This is humility.

It takes humility to pray. He opened the heavens, as Moses had opened the waters of the Red Sea, so that we could all pass behind Him. Jesus gave us his own prayer, which is his loving dialogue with the Father. He gave it to us like a seed of the Trinity, which he wants to take root in our hearts. Let us welcome him! Let us welcome this gift, the gift of prayer. Always with him. And we will not err.



"Many of you that come to the 11am Mass will have seen Bert the large yellow Labrador sitting at the end of one of the pews and in the hall afterwards. Bert is in training to be an assistance dog for Canine Partners (caninepartners.org.uk) and moves to advance training known as doggy university on 29th January therefore the last time he will be at Mass is 28th January. As his puppy parents Peter and I would like to thank everyone for their understanding and acceptance. If anyone would like to know more about canine partners and their work please feel free to talk to us."

Diane and Peter Phillips