



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 Year to grow in prayer — 2024

Back in 2020 Pope Francis started a series of talks on prayer, and he has asked that in preparation for the Jubilee Year of 2025 we devote the year which begins next Sunday to what he describes as a ‘symphony of prayer’. Just as in 2020 there was a pressing need for prayer at the height of the pandemic, so at this time of warfare there is a need for prayer.

“Prayer as the expression of a single “heart and soul” (cf. *Acts* 4:32), which then translates into solidarity and the sharing of our daily bread. Prayer that makes it possible for every man and woman in this world to turn to the one God and to reveal to him what lies hidden in the depths of their heart. Prayer as the royal road to holiness, which enables us to be contemplative even in the midst of activity. In a word, may it be an intense year of prayer in which hearts are opened to receive the outpouring of God’s grace and to make the “Our Father,” the prayer Jesus taught us, the life programme of each of his disciples.” (*Pope Francis*)

The mystery of prayer

Prayer is the breath of faith; it is its most proper expression. Like a cry that issues from the heart of those who believe and entrust themselves to God.

Let us think about the story of Bartimaeus, a character in the Gospel (cf. *Mk* 10:46-52), and I confess that for me he is the most likeable of all. He was blind and sat begging for alms by the roadside on the periphery of his city, Jericho. He is not an anonymous character. He has a face and a name: Bartimaeus, that is, “son of Timaeus”.

One day he heard that Jesus would be passing through there. In fact, Jericho was a crossroads of people, continually criss-crossed by pilgrims and tradesmen. Thus, Bartimaeus positioned himself: he would have done anything possible to meet Jesus. So many people did the same. Let us recall Zacchaeus who climbed up the tree. Many wanted to see Jesus; he did too. In this way the man enters the Gospels as a voice that loudly cries out. He cannot see. He does not know whether Jesus is near or far away but he hears him. He understands this from the crowd which, at a certain point, grows and comes closer.... But he is completely alone and no one is concerned about him. And what does Bartimaeus do?

He cries out. And he cries out and continues to cry out. He uses the only weapon he possesses: his voice. He begins to shout: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (v. 47). And he continues to cry out in this manner. His repeated cries are a nuisance. They do not seem polite and many people scold him, telling him to be quiet: “But be polite; do not do this”. However, Bartimaeus does not keep silent but rather cries out even more loudly: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (v. 47): That expression: “Son of David”, is very important. It means “the Messiah” — he professes the Messiah. It is a profession of faith that emerges from the mouth of that man who was despised by all.

And Jesus listens to his cry. Bartimaeus’ prayer touches his heart, God’s heart, and the doors of salvation open up for him. Jesus calls for him. He jumps to his feet and those who had first told him to be quiet, now lead him to the Master. Jesus speaks to him. He asks him to express his desire — this is important — and then the cry becomes a request: “that I may see again, Lord!” (cf. v. 51). Jesus says to him: “Go your way; your faith has made you well” (v. 52).

He recognises in that poor, defenceless and despised man, all the power of his faith, which attracts the mercy and the power of God. Faith is having two hands raised up, a voice that cries out to implore the gift of salvation.

The Catechism states that “humility is the foundation of prayer” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2559). Prayer is born of the earth, of the humus from which “humble”, “humility” derive. It comes from our precarious state, from our continuous thirst for God (cf. *ibid.*, 2560-2561). Faith, as we have seen with Bartimaeus, is a cry. Lack of faith is the suppression of that cry. That attitude that the people had, in making him keep quiet: they were not people of faith, whereas he was. To suppress that cry is a type of omertà (code of silence). Faith is a protest against a pitiful condition the cause of which we do not understand. Lack of faith is to limit ourselves to endure a situation to which we have become accustomed. Faith is the hope of being saved. Lack of faith is becoming accustomed to the evil that oppresses us and continuing in that way.

We begin this series of catecheses with Bartimaeus’ cry because perhaps everything is already written in someone like him. Bartimaeus is a persevering man. He was surrounded by people who explained that imploring was useless, that it was clamouring without receiving a reply, that it was noise that was only bothersome, and thus please stop crying out. But he did not remain in silence. And in the end he obtained what he wanted. Greater than any discussion to the contrary, there is a voice in mankind’s heart that invokes. We all have this voice within. A voice that comes forth spontaneously without anyone commanding it, a voice that asks itself about the meaning of our journey on earth, especially when we find ourselves in darkness:

“Jesus, have mercy on me! Jesus have mercy on me!”. This is a beautiful prayer. But are these words perhaps not chiselled in all of creation? Everything invokes and implores so that the mystery of mercy may be definitively fulfilled. Not only Christians pray; they share their cry of prayer with all men and women. But the horizon can be further widened: Paul states that all of creation “has been groaning in travail together until now” (*Rom* 8:22). Artists are often the interpreters of this silent cry of creation that is found in every creature and emerges above all in the heart of men and women, because they are “beggars before God” (*ccc*, 2559). It is a beautiful definition of mankind: “beggars before God”. Thank you. .

Notices of Interest

Car Park Safety: 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: There is a small display of cards & mementoes for Confirmation. Christmas cards, books & items are be on sale. Catholic diaries with the order of the Mass are already available. **PLEASE** can anyone help with sales to help my loyal, small group of helpers. Anyone with a calculator can do it - all items priced! Please note that we can only accept cash!

Contact Kath.healey.789@gmail.com.

Bible Alive for December is now available - only £3.00! If you wish to purchase a copy, they are in the narthex as you come into church.

Office Diary: The diary for 2024 is available. If you know that you will want a Mass Intention on a specific date for next year, please see me in the office as soon as possible. *Caryll*

Young People: The Celebration of Christ the King is also designated as 'Youth Sunday', a day when we particularly pray for young people in our parish. We remember those who attend the Children's Liturgy of the Word in the hall during the first part of the 9.00 Sunday Mass, and for the leaders; for those who will be Confirmed this Friday, and for all who are part of the Syro-Malabar Catechesis programme which meets on Sunday afternoons. May God strengthen all our young people in their faith and Christian life

Carol Singing: Would you like to join members of the choir and 9am music team singing Christmas carols at the Crescent House Care Home, on Thursday 7th December from 2pm till 3pm? Please let Alec or Ro on the organ stool know if you'd like to come along and spread some Christmas joy.

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.

Alpha in the Autumn: Alpha is now running weekly on-line, Tuesday evenings. For more info visit www.stgregory.org.uk/alpha

Choir Notes: Saturday morning practices will take place 11-12.30pm every week until 17th December. *Alec*

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.

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

Rotas for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: New rotas will be sent out during the week. Should you be away when rostered, please contact Deacon Michael by phone/text on 07999808997 – he will arrange cover. Thank you for your contribution to our Parish Liturgy

SPUC Northampton: Thank you to the 108 people who signed the petition last Sunday asking the Health Secretary to stop abortion pills by post, a practice which has caused untold suffering for unborn children and women. Please join us at the Society for Protection of Unborn Children. You do not have to make a big commitment or attends lots of meetings, as you can tailor your involvement to suit your circumstances....assist with petition signing, deliver leaflets door to door, be involved with fund raising and many other ways of helping to make abortion unthinkable. Please contact William Currie on 07393965643 (leave a text message if no reply) or popebenedict6@outlook.com

Fire Safety – Important notice. We have had trays made to go under the racks where candles burn to prevent the possibility of a naked flame falling on unlit candles below. Unlit candles **must not** be placed on these trays & must not be stacked one on top of another.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be on Monday 8th January 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 will be on Saturday afternoons at Sacred Heart, Weston Favell. Details, dates, times have been given to all those who are registered. Because of the large number of children, there will be separate sessions for the oldest. All the families concerned have been notified

Confirmation in 2023: Bishop David will give the Sacrament of Confirmation at St Gregory's this Friday, 1st December. Please pray for those being Confirmed.

Clothing Sale: There is a sale (for one day only) of new children's and adult clothes as well as some pre-loved clothes in the hall after both Masses today at **very** reasonable prices. The proceeds will support the Cathedral Foodstore and Gregory Care. If you don't have cash with you, you can have your purchases put aside for you to pick up next week, but the general sale is for this week only.

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, and visit <https://northamptondiocese.org/courses/secrets-of-paul-online/> to register.

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

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!!

Church Cleaning: Helpers are needed to clean the Church on the last Saturday of every month (next - Saturday 30th December), after the morning Mass. All welcome, especially younger, more energetic ones!

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

26th November 2023, Christ the King Year A

Ezekiel was writing in Babylon (now Baghdad) after Israel's exile in 587 BC. He encourages the Israelites, despairing after their crushing defeat. Because he loves his people, God will take over their care and protection from their failed leaders, and provide a new King from David's line.

In the Psalm, a shepherd's care and protection for the sheep he leads, and a host's welcome at a banquet, illustrate God's loving care for us.

From 51 AD Paul worked for about eighteen months with the Christians in Corinth. Five years later he wrote to correct some of their enthusiasms, including doubting the resurrection of the body. Greeks tended to see the spirit as more important than the body and how they behaved in this life. But Paul insists that it is the whole person – body and spirit – that is raised, just as Christ appeared in his risen body to many of his followers after his Resurrection.

In Matthew's gospel, in his final speech before his Passion, Jesus describes the Last Judgement when Jesus is enthroned as King. These are the terrifying criteria he will use: have we fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, visited the sick and those in prison? Dies Irae – Day of Wrath – indeed!

Psalm Response:

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

(Ezek 34:11-12, 15-17 ; Ps 22:1-3. 5-6 r.1; 1 Cor 15:20-26, 28; Matt 25:31-46)

Chris Oliver

We have benefitted from Chris Oliver's notes on the Scripture Readings for many years now. On 14th November his wife died peacefully after 65 years of marriage and in her 89th year of life. Please pray for the soul of Marina Oliver: may she rest in peace.

The Sacrament of Confirmation

The process by which a person becomes a completed Christian (sometimes called 'Christian Initiation') consists of three parts: Baptism, Confirmation and full sharing in the Eucharist. In the case of adults, these three take place at the same time, and the Church is concerned to ensure that the unity of these three parts is safeguarded. (See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church §1285*) In the Orthodox Churches, and in Eastern Rite Catholic Churches the Sacrament of Confirmation is given to babies at the same time as Baptism, although the practice of the Western Catholic Church has been to delay Confirmation. Although this did not happen by design, Confirmation has become linked to early teenage or around the time of transition from primary to secondary schools. This has led to two problems; the first is that it has become the focus of teenage instruction in the Faith, which devalues both the Sacrament and the process of catechesis. The second is the serious error that Confirmation is something the candidate does; as it were, confirming the promises of Baptism, when in fact, Confirmation is something that God does, giving the gift of the Holy Spirit to strengthen the candidate.

Christians "are more perfectly bound to the Church by the sacrament of Confirmation, and the Holy Spirit endows them with special strength so that they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ" (*Vatican II, Lumen Gentium §11*) This speaks of the strength given through the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, and links it with the obligation to spread and defend the faith. Whether Confirmation is given in infancy or in adolescence, young people need to be supported and encouraged in this. The preparation given leading to Confirmation is designed to help the candidate to take their place as a mature Christian, believing and living the faith, practicing Christian virtues, and fulfilling the command of Christ to 'make disciples'. It is unrealistic to suppose that this can be completely achieved over a few months of preparation; it is a lifetime programme. Many who were confirmed in teenage only fully come to realise what the gift they received really means many years later.

We pray for those to be Confirmed this week, and will continue to support and encourage them in their onward Christian pilgrimage.



AN INVITATION TO DIVE HEADFIRST
INTO A LIFE OF COURAGEOUS FAITH.

The deep waters of life bring many challenges like anxiety, fear, depression, and we are called to swim with Jesus to discover a more enduring faith that cannot be shaken by circumstances.

DO YOU WANT TO DIVE DEEPER WITH GOD?

Get ready to exchange fear and confusion for the courage and holy confidence that leads to a life of deep faith and joy!

February 9th - 11th
12-18 years old
£125

SCAN ME



To book your place visit our website
<https://nymo.org/lux-dive/>

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.