



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.”**

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VISION

A Mountain-top Vision

The preface to the Eucharistic Prayer on this Sunday says:

“After he had told the disciples of his coming Death, on the holy mountain he manifested to them his glory, to show, even by the testimony of the law and the prophets, that the Passion leads to the glory of the Resurrection.”

We read today the Transfiguration narrative in isolation, but it needs to be seen in its context in the sweep of the Gospel narrative. Mark gives us no infancy narrative; the beginning of the Good News is the preaching of John the Baptist, and after the Baptism and temptations of Jesus, he calls his disciples, and then begins a series of miracles, some sixteen episodes. It could be thought that this was the main purpose of this phase of the ministry of Jesus, but he clearly tells us otherwise. The morning after he had cured many sick people, he gets up early to pray. The disciples find him and tell him that everyone is looking for him, suggesting that he goes back to continue, but he insists that he must go to other towns to ‘proclaim the message’ because ‘that is what he came to do’ (*Mark 1:35-38*).

Our passage today forms part of the turning point of the Gospel. This begins with Peter recognising Jesus as the Messiah, even though he does not understand the significance of what he is saying, as is revealed by his reaction to Jesus then speaking about his death. (*Mark 8:27-33*)

This leads directly to the Transfiguration narrative, and from then on the thrust of the Gospel is pointing us on towards the Passion, Death and Resurrection. Peter later reflected on this in his second letter (*2 Peter 1:16-18*).

The ‘mountain-top’ is a place from which there is the best view as well as a traditional meeting-place with God. The experience of the Transfiguration is a vision which is designed to give the disciples an understanding that the glory of Jesus, but they are instructed not to speak of it until after the Resurrection (*Mark 9:8-9*). It is clear that they do not really grasp the significance of this until this has happened, indeed, not until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and even then, the prophesy of Jesus that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth (*John 16:13*) shows that they still had much to learn.

The preface to the Eucharistic Prayer on the feast of the Transfiguration is more explicit:

“He revealed his glory in the presence of chosen witnesses and filled with the greatest splendour that bodily form which he shares with all humanity, that the scandal of the cross might be removed from the hearts of his disciples.”

When we read of the faltering discipleship of Peter, we can take some consolation about our own. However, for us, the vision is still vital.

Since the end of October 2017 the parish ‘Vision Statement’ has appeared at the top of every newsletter — the words are a quotation from the prayer that we were asked to say by Bishop Peter.

We are also getting a sort of a vision of the ‘roadmap’ out of the pandemic, sadly not that we will be out of it by Easter, but by God’s grace, maybe by mid-June, if all the four tests are satisfied; that the vaccination programme continues to go to plan, that the vaccination programme sufficiently reduces the number of people needing hospital treatment, and indeed, dying, that infection rates do not risk a surge in hospital admissions and that new variants do not fundamentally change the risk of lifting restrictions.

We have at least another four months of restrictions, and the only changes that relate to the Church are the numbers attending Weddings and Baptisms.

One serious issue is that the numbers allowed to be in church will not be changed for Good Friday. Our experience on Ash Wednesday (when there were two Masses) is causing some worry, and thought will have to be given about limiting the numbers for the Liturgy of the Passion.

However, today’s Gospel invites us to see beyond Good Friday to the resurrection, and our parish Vision Statement invites us to see beyond the end of the pandemic to how we will be equipped to ‘confidently and humbly proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ’.

Our vision of the Church, and of the Church locally in our parish must be one of growth, mission and service to God and our community.

Peter, James and John on the mountain-top had the same vision; seeing the majesty of Christ transfigured and in the context of the Law, embodied in Moses, and the Prophets, embodied in Elijah.

Our vision begins with the idea of ‘thriving’. This must mean that the parish’s life is sustainable, and this can only be realised if we are truly a ‘missionary parish’. There are many aspects of the vision of a thriving Catholic community, but it is one in which everyone is a valued member and someone whose life, prayer and service all form part of that which makes for thriving.

As we look forward to the end of the lockdown, we share in the vision of what our parish will look like post-COVID, above all, sharing in the vision of the glory and majesty of Christ.

Notices of Interest

Bible Alive for Lent is now available. The cost is £3.00. If you want to purchase a copy, they are near the hand-sanitiser in the narthex as you come into church.

Repository: If you wish to buy anything, please come to the Church between 9 and 10.00am and speak to a Steward who will show you what to do and where to go. St. Patrick's Day and Easter cards are now available.

CAFOD "Walk for Water": Johann Kastern has taken up the challenge, and would like sponsorship. Please see his page: <https://walk.cafod.org.uk/fundraising/walk-for-water1375>

Masses and Covid security in Lockdown: It is of the greatest importance that the church is a place of safety from the COVID virus, & while clergy & stewards do all they can to have systems in place, there is a responsibility on everyone to adhere to government regulations & maintain the safety of **everyone** as well as themselves in church. While 'bubbles' & households may sit together, there should be at least 1 metre distance separating those not in the same 'bubble' or household & must wear masks. We are still allowed to come to Mass; this is in part because churches are safe places. It is up to us to keep the church safe.

Face masks: Wearing face masks is compulsory in churches & you should wear one if you can. Stewards are not responsible for policing this, but may remind you that this is the law.

Red Box / Missio contributors: Please be aware that you may receive a phone call in the coming weeks about Gift Aid and other ways of supporting our Foreign Missions financially. The call will come from your Promoter or from Dorothy or Alec. Keep those on the front line in your prayers. God bless. Alec (622153)

Being a Dynamic Catholic: It is planned that through Lent there will be regular talks on the parish website and Facebook page based on a book entitled "Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic" by Matthew Kelly. This could form part of a Lockdown Lent discipline.

Contact CAFOD: CAFOD has a head office in South London, as well as offices based in each Catholic diocese around England and Wales, and also overseas.

Email: cafod@cafod.org.uk

Website: <https://cafod.org.uk/>

CAFOD Head Office

Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7JB

Track and Trace: The government have now released their app to support track & trace & we have a QR code which can be scanned to record your presence at church. This is not obligatory, but should help in the important task of controlling the spread of the virus. As responsible members of society, we should comply with this request.

SPUC: You could save a life! There are two simple ways in which you could be a life saver; firstly, please consider joining the Northampton Branch of SPUC, you would be helping to end the shame of abortion in this country and protecting women; secondly, if you are unable to become a member of SPUC, you could offer your support by joining the prayer team. All you would have to do is pray for Pro Life causes, either as a group, or on your own at home. If either of these things appeal to you and you want to join the fight to protect unborn children and their mothers, then please contact William Currie; wpcurie@btinternet.com or 07393965643

To Catholic Universe and Catholic Times readers in the parish: Papers can be delivered direct to your home every week, POST FREE. Please go to www.thecatholicuniverse.com or call them on 0161 820 5722 and they will arrange for you. SPECIAL OFFER - 3 MONTHS: £25.00 — 12 Months: £99.00 DIGITAL COPY: 12 Months: £55.00

Right to Life: A new parliamentary motion (EDM 1340) is calling on the Government to introduce new guidance on fetal pain. The evidence that babies can feel pain in the womb, and during many abortions, highlights the humanity of the unborn child and provides another important reason to introduce legislation to protect the unborn child from abortion. Right To Life UK have set up an easy-to-use tool which makes it simple to contact your MP, and ask them to sign this motion calling on the Government to introduce new guidance on fetal pain. It only takes 30 seconds using this easy-to-use tool. This tool can be accessed by visiting the link below: www.righttolife.org.uk/FetalPainMotion

Exploring the Post-Lockdown Church: The webinar series has been wonderful. There were over 3,000 views! This is definitely something we will be looking to do again in the future. If you want to catch up with any you missed, all the videos are here: <http://formationpathways.co.uk/exploring-the-post-lockdown-church-webinar-series/>

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

Vianney Mission Prayer Group will not meet during this time.

Tots @St Gregory's: As with other meetings, Tots has been cancelled until further notice.

Financial Support for Self-Isolation: Please see the following article regarding financial help available for those who are self-isolating;

<https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/health/coronavirus/how-apply-self-isolation-financial-support-now-available-across-northamptonshire-3004756>

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: Please note that you will need to phone Deacon Michael on 07999808997 before you attend, to book your place.

First Holy Communion 2021: If you have a child who wishes to make their 1st Holy Communion next year & are in school years 3-6, please email Stella at swatts49@outlook.com, who will note your name & the name & age of your child. This is still very much a first step as we are still unsure of how we can prepare the children at the moment; please be patient and, as soon as we possibly can, we'll give you more info about our programme & timings at which stage you can decide whether or not you wish to proceed.

Confirmation: Yet again we are thrown into confusion! We await more information. This continues to be difficult!

Ask your MP to support an amendment to help stop

forced abortion in Xinjiang, China: There is evidence that women in the Uyghur Muslim community in Xinjiang, are being subjected to forced abortions. If you would like to email your MP to support the amendment, you can do this using a tool which set up on the Genocide Response campaign website, which can be accessed by visiting the link below: <https://genocideresponse.org/>

Parish Finances: Thank you to everyone who has been so very generous during this lockdown. Our parish finances are reasonably stable. Your generosity is much appreciated!

Standing Order via Donor's Own Bank. You can set up a standing order for donations to your parish using either your on line bank account or in branch. The information required to make the donation 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)

Scripture Readings 28th February 2021, 2nd Sunday of Lent, Year B

In Genesis God sets a greater test of Abraham's faith than might appear: Isaac seems now to be Abraham's only son. His wife, Sarah, had persuaded Abraham to drive out into the desert his other son, Ishmael, with her mother, Hagar, the slave woman. God had promised Abraham would be father of a host of nations, with as many descendants as stars in the sky. How could this now come about? On the way Isaac had asked "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham answered: "God will provide himself". Abraham's faith is rewarded and God renews his covenant.

The Psalmist offers sacrifice and grateful praise after God heard his prayer at death's door.

Paul urges the Romans to have similar trust in God. That God gave up his only Son to death shows how completely God loves us. Paul insists that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

In our last reading from Mark's gospel until the Ascension, the disciples appear confused by Jesus' transfiguration. Although God has again confirmed Jesus as his Son, they do not understand how Jesus relates to Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets. After Jesus' resurrection they would realise Jesus had come to fulfil the whole of Israel's scriptures.

Psalm Response:

**I will walk in the presence of the Lord
in the land of the living.**

(Gen 22:1-2,9-18; Psalm 115(116):10.15-19; Rom 8:31-34; Mark 9:2-10)

Chris Oliver



Why Alpha

Pope Francis has asked that every parish and every Catholic have a missionary heart. In 2019, over 5,600 Catholic parishes and organisations around the world ran Alpha with an estimated 310,000 participants.

"I have had the privilege of participating in various Alphas in Quebec and have witnessed how lives are changed and how the participants are touched by the teachings, witnessing and fellowship experienced during the course. The method is simple yet very effective. Small groups are definitely a key to the success of this tool of New Evangelisation." (Cardinal Gérald Lacroix Archbishop of Quebec)

God asks us to Reclaim Our Common Home?

The pandemic exposed many of the inadequacies of how our world currently works.

Why Reclaim Our Common Home? "Anyone who thinks that the only lesson to be learned was the need to improve what we were already doing, or to refine existing systems and regulations, is denying reality." (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, §7) We are experiencing the worst global health crisis in a century. The coronavirus pandemic is devastating lives and shattering families in Britain and across the world, with disastrous consequences for people's jobs and livelihoods. The pandemic is exposing many of the inadequacies of how our world currently works. It has proved that **we need greater cooperation between nations, solidarity between people and a greater focus on the poorest in society.**

Pope Francis, and popes before him, have consistently called for a transformation of the way our global economy works and the ideology upon which it is built. For too long, it has been based on the pursuit of profit and growth, above care for people and our planet.

A system based on unregulated free markets has created extreme inequalities, and has allowed some countries and companies to become wealthy at the expense of others while the precious gifts of climate, nature and biodiversity have been destroyed.

Our campaign is a response to Pope Francis's **call for a new way of thinking about the world, and to take an active part in renewing our troubled societies by embracing the universal values of solidarity and fraternity.** He tells us this moment of extraordinary turmoil is the time "to rethink the future of our common home and our common project" and, in doing so, address the causes of poverty, inequality and the climate emergency.

To begin the journey of reclaiming our common home this year, we are invited to work towards achieving three major goals.

- **RECLAIM** nature so that everyone can breathe clean air and be protected from the threat of climate disasters.
- **RECLAIM** the world's land and resources so they are more fairly distributed and all our brothers and sisters around the world can live in dignity.
- **RECLAIM** power so that everyone can be involved in decision making and have control over their own lives.



Pope Francis tell us "the world is itself crying out in rebellion". What are we going to do about it? As Catholics, we are called not to stay silent and not to be passive. This is why Reclaim Our Common Home is a call to action! It's a call to participate both individually and collectively in rebuilding a more dignified and sustainable world after the pandemic.



SECOND COLLECTIONS 2021

28th February	CAFOD (Lenten Fast Day 26th Feb)
2nd April	Good Friday Collection for the Holy Places
25th April	Diocesan Priests' Training Fund
16th May	Mass Media
20th June	Day for Life
27th June	Peter's Pence
11th July	Apostleship of the Sea
19th September	Home Mission Sunday
3rd October	CAFOD (Harvest Fast Day 1st October)
24th October	Mission Sunday
7th November	Bishop's Maintenance Fund
14th November	Sick & Retired Priests' Fund

