



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

The Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost)

The Jewish festival of Shavuot is described in the books of Numbers and Leviticus as an agricultural festival, marking the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest. It was a day of the ‘first fruits’, when the offerings were made to God of the first gifts of the harvest.

In the commentary provided by Chris Oliver (*see inside*) he notes that it was the decoding of the Dead Sea Scrolls that showed another significance of the feast.

In the book of Exodus we find that it was of the day of the third full moon after the Passover that the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai. This is, in fact 56 days after the Passover, but is close enough to the 50 days after the Passover for the two ideas to have become joined.

It is worth our while to consider how our (Christian) understanding of Pentecost relates to the connection with the Jewish understanding of the events on Mount Sinai.

A Gift

The first and most obvious link is the fact that both celebrate a gift from God. For the Jew the Torah, the Law, was a gift from God. For us, the gift of the Holy Spirit is also a gift from God. At first sight, they may seem to be very different gifts, but we need to understand the Torah through Jewish eyes to recognise that it is the record of God’s love for his people. It is not, first of all, a rule book.

“Lord, how I love your law!

It is ever in my mind.

Your command makes me wiser than my foes
for it is mine for ever.

(*Psalm 118:97/119:97*)

Equally, the Holy Spirit is a gift from God, and one of those seven-fold gifts is that of wisdom. In the Old Testament the Law imparts wisdom, in the New, it is the Holy Spirit that imparts wisdom.

Thanksgiving

In the great Passover celebration and meal for Jewish families, there is a hymn of praise called ‘Dayenu’ (It would have been enough). It goes through the exodus and wilderness experience of the Israelites, thanking God for each gift; the escape from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the feeding in the desert and the gift of Manna, the giving of the Torah, the peace of the Sabbath and the home in the Holy Land. Each one of these would have been a sufficient gift, but God has given that and more. So Shavuot is a day of thanksgiving, and with the addition of the celebration of the first-fruits, is even more a day of thanksgiving, not just for events of the past, but for mercies received in the present day.

For the Christian too, Pentecost is a day of thanksgiving. In the gift of the Holy Spirit, God is giving us the abiding presence of Jesus, and the recognition that God dwells within us.

There is a sort of progression of understanding through the Bible, from the creation narratives where we see God as the giver of life, but distinct from us. Adam and Eve met with God walking in the garden in the cool of the day (*Genesis 3:8*) and tried to hide from him. In Jesus, God becomes human himself, and experiences for himself temptation and all the hardships of human life — persecution, exile, becoming a refugee, hunger and thirst, being misunderstood, torture and then death. But then he gives humanity the Holy Spirit so that God is no longer someone other than us, he is not just one with us, but he actually lives *in* us!

What cause for thanksgiving we have!

A Challenge

The Law, the Torah describes a holy life, and through the many and various commandments, traditionally 613 of them, the observant Jew can achieve perfection. This was (and is) a challenge and not an easy task.

They too should arise and tell their sons
that they too should set their hopes on God
and never forget God’s deeds
but keep every one of his commands.

(*Psalm 77:6-7/78:6-7*)

For us too, life in the Spirit is a challenge, but here there is a serious difference between what Shavuot celebrates and what we celebrate at Pentecost.

“The world is ever near. I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear; my foes are ever near me, around me and within; but Jesu, draw thou nearer and shield my soul from sin.” (*John E. Bode*)

It is through the Holy Spirit, given to the Church at Pentecost that Jesus is within us, and is able to shield us from sin. Without that gift, it is purely by hard graft that temptation is resisted, or more usually, not resisted. With the wonderful gift that we are given, God works within us, giving us his grace to help us live a life of virtue.

That is not to say that we are not challenged by the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit guides us to go beyond our comfort zone in deeds of love and kindness and in the service of the proclamation of the Gospel. In the teaching that Pope Francis has been giving on the ‘passion for evangelisation’, he has already spoken of the missionary martyrs, mentioning the Missionary Sisters of Charity who were martyred in Yemen. Last Wednesday he spoke of St Andrew Kim Tae-gon, the first Korean priest-martyr.

St Andrew Kim Tae-gon was challenged and inspired by the Holy Spirit, but also helped and supported by the Holy Spirit to be an effective missionary disciple. May we be also.

Notices of Interest

Car Park Safety: Please remember that Parents/Carers are responsible for children in their charge whilst using the car park. 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.



We welcome into the family of the Church
Ines Rosa Christine Neal-Gonzalez,
Luca Martinica
And Darcy Maria Blachford
who received Christian Baptism recently.
Please pray for them and their families.

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.

Repository: The Repository is open after every Sunday Mass wherever possible! We need more helpers prepared to stand for a few minutes after Mass - all stock is marked, so an easy task!
There is now a small display of items for 1st Holy Communion and Confirmation. Contact Kath.healey.789@gmail.com.

Bible Alive for June 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.

Diocesan Pilgrimage to Walsingham: 10th June 2023:



A coach will leave from St. Gregory's at 8am on Saturday 10th June, leaving Walsingham at about 5.00pm. Cost £25 per person (payable in advance). I understand that this is considerably more than in previous years, but the cost of coach hire has also increased dramatically. Please see poster for full details. To book, please speak to Caryl in the Office, or add your details to the list in the Lobby area and see one of the Clergy to pay.

Tots @ St Gregory's: There will be no Tuesday meeting on 30th May but the next Tuesday (6th June), weather permitting, we will meet near the cafe in the park. There is no charge & a snack will be provided but bring drinks! Phone Jean on 07980866516 if uncertain.

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.

The Diocesan Assembly: There will be preparation sessions for the delegates of our Pastoral area here at St Gregory's on May 24th and June 7th in church at 7pm.

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, and remains in the Sacristy for the time being.

Choir notes: The next choir practice is after evening Mass on Thursday 29 June, the Holy Day feast of St Peter and St Paul. *Alec*

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be on Monday 26th June in the Sacristy at 7pm. Please note you will need to phone Deacon Michael on 07999808997 before you attend, to book a place.

First Holy Communion 2023: The second group of young people are receiving Holy Communion for the first time today, and then next week there will be more. Enrolment for 2024 will be in the autumn; please watch this newsletter for information nearer the time.

Confirmation in 2023: Those interested in Confirmation preparation should have spoken to Helen and will know the plan for the coming months.

URGENT NOTE ON FINANCES

Many people transferred to Standing Orders with their bank through lockdown, and it is this that has kept the parish finances stable through that very difficult time. For this we are deeply grateful. However, it appears that Gift Aid declarations in many cases have not followed those standing orders. This does not require new Gift Aid declarations, but please can any who have transferred to standing orders and pay income tax please contact Fr Andrew (preferably by email) so that their Gift Aid can be linked to their donation. Claims can be made for up to three years, so there is some urgency about this.

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)**

Pentecost in the Park-28th May 2023, 2pm-5pm: Come & join us to celebrate Pentecost at the Bandstand at Abington Park, Today, 2pm-5pm. Bring a picnic, your chairs, your friends & family.

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

The Letter to the Romans: From Sunday 18th June, the second reading at Sunday Mass is from the Letter to the Romans, and there will be an on-line Bible Study run by the Diocese on Wednesday evening, 14th June at 7.30 pm. Please email Fr Andrew for the link which will be sent nearer the time..

Caritas Northampton: The following items are needed for local families with young children:

Baby cots x 2
Double bed and mattresses x 2
Wardrobe, chest of drawers, table and chairs. (No more vacuum cleaners — thank you!) If anyone has anything to donate could they please call Caritas on 01604 434362 to arrange collection.

Orchestral Pops: Northampton Concert Orchestra is presenting 'Orchestral Pops' with soloist Lincoln Noel (Piano) to include orchestral arrangements of music by Abba, Burt Bacharach, the Beatles, Paul Simon, Freddie Mercury & Andrew Lloyd Webber on Friday 9th June, 7.30pm at the Northampton Cathedral Centre, Primrose Hill, NN2 6AG. Tickets £10 at the door. See poster for full details.

Training for Extra-ordinary Minister's of the Eucharist: The 3rd session of training for both new & experienced Eucharistic Ministers is next Wednesday, 31st May. It will run both at 11am & 7.30pm. Any who have missed the first two are still invited to join for the third, Deacon Michael is compiling a list of those willing to take up this ministry. There is a Holy Hour at the Cathedral in Sunday June 4th at 3.00 pm for Eucharistic Ministers and will include commissioning, alternatively there will be commissioning at the Masses at St Gregory's on Sunday 11th June, the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Assembly Insight

"The Church's vocation is to bring joy to the world"
(Pope Benedict XIV, Message for the 27th World Youth Day, 2012)

Prayer 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 28th May 2023, Pentecost Sunday Year A

Pentecost was less understood by Christians than the other two Jewish pilgrimage feasts of Passover and Tabernacles. Then the Dead Sea Scrolls showed that Pentecost was associated with God giving the Covenant on Sinai, and enrolling new community members. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles fits neatly with this Covenant feast.

The Psalm calls us to praise God's creative wisdom. Filled with wonder at the details of God's glorious works, this psalm is well worth reading in full.

Acts tells us that they "had all met", including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. Wind and fire remind us of Sinai. The list of peoples who hear is effectively the programme for the mission now starting.

After rebuking the Corinthians for their factions and giving us the earliest description of the Eucharist, Paul shows how Christians

together make up the one body of Christ on earth. It is the one Spirit who gives the gifts each of us needs for the particular task God has given us.

In the first ending of John's Gospel, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalen after his resurrection, and then to the disciples together in a closed room "for fear of the Jews". Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on them, sending them on mission with power to forgive sins.

Psalm Response: **Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth.**

(Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 103(104); 1 Corinthians 12:3-7,12-13; John 20:19-23)

Chris Oliver

The Healing Garden

The Healing Garden is a place of sanctuary for survivors of abuse and all those in need of healing. A place which we hope will provide a relaxing and peaceful setting to spend time, experience quietness and contemplation, to help improve well-being and reduce isolation. Although the Healing Garden was opened in May 2022, it remains an ongoing development – a garden is never complete – which mirrors our diocesan commitment to listening and responding compassionately to those with lived experience of abuse and its impact. There will be a special collection for this on June 4th.

Alpha is having a break this week for school half-term

The next Alpha session will be on June 6th, and will look at the way in which God continues the healing ministry of Jesus in the Church today.

For those who have missed the Alpha, there will be another in the autumn. The sessions will start in September, and although evenings will be light then, by the time it finishes it will be the first week in December, and many are less happy about coming out, so this will be an 'on-line' course through Zoom. However, so that those on the course can meet face-to-face, there will be a welcome session the week before the official start, on Tuesday 12th September in the Hall at 7.15 pm. There will be fuller details soon.

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

The Ministry of Welcome Our 'One Step Challenge'

As a parish, we own a great debt of gratitude to those who offer a welcome to everyone coming to Mass. When we first re-opened after lockdown, a wonderful band responded to the need for 'stewards' to comply with the national requirements that were laid down to allow us to be open. This ministry was appreciated by everyone who came to Mass; not just for the supply of hand sanitiser, but the personal welcome that was given.

As time has gone by, the need for sanitiser has diminished, but the appreciation of the friendly welcome has not. However, we are now relying on a very small number of people for this, and illness or holiday might result in there being no one at the door to offer this welcome. This ministry is both appreciated and vital.

Part of our parish preparation for the Diocesan Assembly is to undertake a "One Step Challenge", which consists of taking one thing which was raised frequently in the parish Synod conversations and seeking to implement the suggestion. The challenge to provide a team of welcomers should be one which we can easily meet.

Many people feel nervous of taking on this ministry — and it is a **ministry**, as important as proclaiming the readings or assisting in the distribution of Holy Communion. The Pastoral Ministry Office of the Diocese ran a 'Zoom' course on this just after we came out of lockdown, and it is available to us. We will run it in the parish on Wednesdays June 21st and 28th, in person in the morning and by Zoom in the evening. Details next week.

CALLED & EQUIPPED

A year-long programme, offering a foundation in Catholic teaching and a journey of faith formation. It is for anyone active in parish life or coming into ministry.

There will be two information webinars about the course in June.

Visit www.pastoralministryoffice.org

Rayner Willnecker has recently completed this programme, and would be happy to talk to anyone who might be interested in enrolling for the coming year.

Gregory Care

Support for refugees

We continue to work with local churches supporting refugees and thank you to those who have donated things through us in the past. We are now looking for:-

Wool and knitting needles and children's bikes, and helmets.

The wool and needles can be left in the Gregory Care box however if you have a bike you would like to donate please speak to one of the team so we can arrange collection and delivery.

Thank you

Gregory Care

☎ 07434 669011