



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

Evangelisation and Proselytisation

Every Wednesday successive Popes have given a catechetical address as part of their general audience, and on 11th January this year Pope Francis began a new series of talks, and his theme is one which is dear to his heart, and should be for all of us. He speaks of the ‘passion for evangelisation, that is, *‘apostolic zeal.’* He describes this as a ‘vital dimension for the Church: the community of Jesus’ disciples was in fact born apostolic, born missionary, not proselyting. They have nothing to do with each other.’

Pope Francis expands on this theme and encourages us to go deeper into the evangelising passion.

The contrast between ‘evangelisation’ and ‘proselytisation’ is first spelt out by Pope Benedict XVI in his opening homily to the fifth general conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in 2007 at the Shrine of Aparecida. He refers to his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, in which he “sought to point out to everyone the essence of the Christian message. The Church considers herself the *disciple and missionary of this Love*: missionary only insofar as she is a disciple, capable of being attracted constantly and with renewed wonder by the God who has loved us and who loves us first (cf. *1 John 4:10*). The Church does not engage in proselytism. Instead, she grows by *“attraction”*: just as Christ “draws all to himself” by the power of his love, culminating in the sacrifice of the Cross, so the Church fulfils her mission to the extent that, in union with Christ, she accomplishes every one of her works in spiritual and practical imitation of the love of her Lord.”

The Scripture reading that Pope Francis began with was the call of Matthew (the reading that would be read on the following Saturday, but in Mark’s account.) He offers this as a way to draw the distinction between proselytisation and evangelisation. Matthew tells us that ‘Jesus saw a man named Matthew’ and in the Gospel that bears his name, there is no room for doubt: ‘he was sitting by the customs house’ clearly indicating that he was a tax-collector. Mark gives us added information; he was the ‘son of Alphaeus’. Jesus simply sees him as the human being he is.

Last Friday was the official ‘Holocaust Memorial Day’ and its theme was of ‘ordinary people’; ordinary people who suffered and died, and ordinary people who operated the gas chambers. What can make an ‘ordinary person’ become a killer; but what can make an ‘ordinary person’ become a saint.

We can so easily define a person, as Pope Francis says: ‘with an adjective’. To put it another way, we can so easily pre-judge people by their appearance, by their accent, by their ethnicity. So, to ordinary people, Matthew was a tax collector, a collaborator with the Roman Empire, and lining his pocket from what he creamed off from the taxes ‘ordinary people’ paid. He was unspeakable, and outcast. There were few occupations held in greater contempt. Yet Jesus simply saw the man, Matthew, son of Alphaeus. Jesus says to Matthew: “Follow me”, and Matthew got up and followed Jesus. This following did not result in an immediate move on; Matthew has a banquet that evening.

In this banquet Jesus met a lot more tax collectors, and it is probable that some of them also became followers of Jesus. Maybe he met Matthew’s father, Alphaeus, as if he was not known to the Christian community that Mark was addressing, why give us his name? However the life-story of Alphaeus is lost in the mists of time.

Pope Francis points out that Matthew ‘got up’. It was the understanding that in any social (or financial) interaction, the senior person; the more powerful person sits down. In this Sunday’s Gospel we hear the beginning of the ‘Sermon on the Mount’, and it begins with Jesus ‘sitting down’. The Rabbis sat down to teach; their students would frequently stand. A Bishop would preach from his Cathedra; his formal seat in his Cathedral. So Matthew immediately leaves his position of authority and supremacy, Jesus has removed him from his position of power. He is now one with those who are paying taxes.

Jesus has found Matthew, and approaches him as an ‘ordinary person’, not as tax collector, not as a sinner (any more than that we all are), just as an ‘ordinary person’.

To what extent is Matthew a changed man from that moment? We don’t know, but Pope Francis points out that in the banquet which Matthew has, and with the company he invites, he is back in his old environment. Matthew’s life with Christ does not begin in some remote place, some ideal place. It begins right where he is. And it is a ministry of *attraction*.

A wise priest said that ‘no one was argued into heaven, only loved into heaven’. The proselytising mind is one which is eager to engage in religious argument. The sad truth is that winning the argument does not win the soul.

This is the way of Alpha, the way of being attractive to people for Christ. It is the way that, over a banquet, Christians can attract ‘ordinary people’ for Christ. It is a way that ‘ordinary people’ can discover more about the Christian faith without being in any way threatened or denigrated. Pope Francis finished his talk with this story:

“I remember once, in a hospital in Buenos Aires, the women religious who worked there left because they were too few, and they couldn’t run the hospital. And a community of sisters from Korea came. And they arrived, let’s say on a Monday for example (I don’t remember the day). They took possession of the sisters’ house in the hospital and on Tuesday they came down to visit the sick in the hospital, but they didn’t speak a word of Spanish. They only spoke Korean and the patients were happy, because they commented: “Well done! These nuns, bravo, bravo!” “But what did the sister say to you?” “Nothing, but with her gaze she spoke to me, they communicated Jesus”. Not to communicate ourselves but communicating Jesus, with a gaze, with gestures. This is attraction, the opposite of proselytism.

This attractive witness, this joyful witness is the goal to which Jesus leads us with his loving gaze and with the outgoing movement that his Spirit raises up in our hearts. And we can consider whether our gaze resembles that of Jesus, to attract the people, to bring them closer to the Church. Let us think about that.”

Notices of Interest

Car Park: Once again, may I remind car park users to be more considerate of others & *NOT* block the entrance/exit at any time. To do so makes things very difficult for other users and could be dangerous. If there are no places available, please use nearby roadside spaces.
Thank you. *Caryll*.



We welcome into the family of the Church
Ilaria Chantell Plesca
who received Christian Baptism recently.
Please pray for her and her family.

Bible Alive for February 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: The Repository is open after every Sunday Mass wherever possible! We also need more helpers prepared to stand for a few minutes after Mass - all stock is marked, so an easy task!
Contact Kath.healey.789@gmail.com. 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.

Hope Centre: The Hope Centre's cupboards are quite bare at the moment and they would so much appreciate it if people could kindly donate a little extra, or just as much as they can, to fill the shelves again! Many thanks.

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.

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 has restarted: 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. For more information, please see: <https://northamptondiocese.org/courses/encounter-northampton/>

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**

Retrouvaille: A Programme for Couples Struggling in their

Marriages: Help Your Marriage. Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille is a programme to support couples who have difficulties in their marriage. Tens of thousands of couples headed for divorce have successfully saved their marriages by attending & using the tools provided. There is no group therapy or group work. For confidential info or to register for the next programme commencing with a Face to Face weekend in Welwyn Garden City on 24 - 26 February 2023, or a Virtual weekend on 6 - 9 July 2023, call/text 07887296983 or 07973380443 or email retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com - or visit www.retrouvaille.org.uk

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

CAFOD is looking for people to give some time and join in our parish mission of global outreach. Could you help develop our work in parishes or Catholic schools? Training and support is provided. See cafod.org.uk/Volunteer for more information or get in touch - Deborah Purfield 07786 114 390 | dpurfield@cafod.org.uk

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be on Monday 13th Feb 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.

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: Until the beginning of Lent, refreshment donations are given to Gregory Care which supports those in material need in our own parish, but also operates the toiletry collections for the Cathedral Foodstore. The total of donations to the Hope Centre has been magnificent, and will provide significant help for the homeless of our town.

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 29th January 2023, 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

About 630 BC Zephaniah strongly denounced the idolatry that had developed during the reign of Josiah. He prophesied “A day of wrath, ... a day of darkness and gloom” – from which we have our hymn *Dies Irae*. But God would leave a remnant of humble and lowly people – from whom tradition believes Jesus’ and John the Baptist’s parents came, and also Simeon and Anna.

Continuing his letter to the Corinthians, Paul reminds them “the world did not know God through wisdom”. God has made us members of Christ, who has become our wisdom. God’s plan works in ways that seem foolish and weak to us. We have nothing to boast about except the Lord.

About forty years after Jesus died, Matthew followed Mark in writing a gospel, which he arranged as five collections of sayings

by Jesus, alternating with five collections describing what Jesus did. The first collection of sayings, the Sermon on the Mount, starts with the Beatitudes, which we hear today. Over the remaining Sundays before Lent we hear the rest of this Sermon, in which Jesus develops the Commandments given to Moses into positive ways of living. Although much of the promised happiness of the kingdom of God is in the future, it does extend to the present time in anticipation.

Psalm Response: **How happy are the poor in spirit: theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.**

Zeph 2:3,3:12-13; Psalm 145; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Matthew 5:1-12

Chris Oliver

GREGORY CARE

Thank you all for your generous support over the past few months. Your support has been amazing and has enabled us to provide gifts to several families over Christmas as well as providing clothes, toys and household items to families in need. We have recently committed to working with local churches to support Ukrainian families staying at the Westone Hotel. As we have no storage facilities we cannot accept general donations but please lookout for specific items we may be asking for.

Gregory Care is a very small dedicated team of volunteers who would welcome more volunteers with new skills, ideas and time. If you would like to hear more about us please speak to Carole or Catherine.

TOILETRIES

Two years on and your support providing toiletries for the Cathedral Foodstore continues to grow in line with demand. Your generosity is not only appreciated by the recipients but has also been noted by Foodstore volunteers, local councillors and other supporters of the Foodstore. St Gregory’s was ahead of the game in recognising the negative impact of hygiene poverty. Your weekly contributions are helping to improve the mental and physical health of local people in need. As a parish we should be proud of what we are continuing to achieve. We hope some of you may have seen the write up in the Chronicle and Echo - ‘The reality of a typical Thursday morning Foodbank session’ (9th January)

<https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/news/people/the-reality-of-a-typical-thursday-morning-foodbank-session-in-northampton-in-january-a-volunteers-view-3979701>

Alpha beginning on March 14th 2023

The dates of the next Alpha Course are in the next column, and we are hoping that by ending in mid-June before the holiday season starts, many people will be able to attend. Everyone will be given a ‘plus one’ invitation; that is, please come and bring a friend. All offers of help are welcome; if you can help, please speak to one of the Alpha Team, who can be identified by their badge on a lanyard. Help is needed in preparing the hall in the afternoon, in the catering team and in the washing-up team, but most of all, help is needed in advertising the course and in bringing friends, and in coming yourself!

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?

Your Invitation, with a ‘plus one’

What to expect at Alpha:

- 1 A good meal. Sometimes people come to the first session having already had a meal at home. They don’t make that mistake a second time! If you have particular dietary needs, there is a space on the registration form. There is no charge for the meal, although donations are accepted
[\[www.stgregory.org.uk/alpha\]](http://www.stgregory.org.uk/alpha)
- 2 Good company. Of course to some extent that depends on who comes, but the ideal is to make the evening as enjoyable for everyone
- 3 An interesting film. Not a Hollywood blockbuster, but an interesting exploration of the questions you see above
- 4 Interesting conversation in which everyone is allowed to have their say; religion is not ‘pushed down anyone’s throat and it is okay to disagree
- 5 At the on the evening, we find that most people are in no hurry to go home



