



# 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



## Pastoral Letter First Sunday of Advent 29 November 2020 On Mission

Dear friends in Christ,

‘Christmas is cancelled!’ This abrupt headline appeared during September, causing consternation throughout the land. It became clearer, journalists were referring to the cultural trappings of a festive season. But there was also the lingering prospect that we may not be able to meet up with all our loved ones because of the virus. In truth of course Christmas cannot be cancelled. It is a historical event, one which has a wonderful implication for ourselves as we journey through these difficult days with hope. In the words of St Paul, ‘when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.’ (*Galatians 4:4-5*) Three centuries after the apostle wrote those words, St Athanasius reflected upon what it means that God sent his Son, born of a woman. This great theologian of Christmas lived in a time when some denied the truth of the Incarnation, that Jesus is consubstantial with the Father. And so he tells us why Jesus, ‘the incorporeal and incorruptible Word of God entered our world.’ (*St Athanasius, On the Incarnation 2.8*) Our human minds ‘had fallen finally to the level of sensible things’. (*St Athanasius, On the Incarnation 3.16*)

On this First Sunday of Advent, Jesus invites us to raise our minds beyond the senses in order to ponder the mysteries of faith. God’s unfolding plan of salvation will reach a climax at the end of history. We should await this day with active faith, and not in some distracted and indifferent manner. Rather, Jesus tells us in today’s Gospel, ‘Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come.’ Maybe these words sound threatening to us? It does not have to be so. Like excited children waiting for Christmas to come, our Advent faith encourages us to await Jesus’ second coming with longing and persevering hope.

And there is more. Jesus tells us today that he has ‘left his servants in charge, each with his own task’. Pope Francis explains this task clearly, ‘In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (*cf. Mt 28:19*). All the baptised, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelisation... The new evangelisation calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptised.’ (*Evangelii Gaudium 120*) There may be many reasons why we feel inadequate for this missionary task. We may have become indifferent and have fallen asleep. Perhaps our confidence has been robbed by scandal and institutional failure on the part of the

Church. We feel ashamed by our weakness and lack of gifts. Despite all these things, Pope Francis makes it clear we are all in this together. We may have the idea this is for others. And even if we want to be missionary disciples, perhaps we are unclear about what this looks like in our lives.

St Therese of Lisieux, Patroness of the Missions, said, ‘I will desire in heaven the same thing as on earth: to love Jesus and to make him loved.’ (*Letter to her missionary brothers*) Does this not encapsulate the essence of mission? First of all, a real *desire* that others find Jesus to be the Way, the Truth and the Life in their own lives. (*Cf Jn 14.6*) And secondly, a recognition that mission is about bringing others into a personal and loving relationship with the Lord. We might develop business plans, pastoral plans, have all sorts of strategies and projects, but if we do not know that Jesus loves us unconditionally and we are invited to love Him in return, then we are missing the mark by a long way!

We learn from our experience. After some initial disorientation at the beginning of the pandemic, it is as though we Catholics have found our feet again during the lockdowns. We are reaching out to those in need in so many largely unobserved ways. Parish communities are using virtual platforms and social media to share a rich feast of liturgical, spiritual and catechetical experiences. There is social outreach to the elderly and to families, food banks and errand services. A number have risen to the challenge of church stewardship, enabling our churches to be open for prayer. I sense in all this, we seek to encounter the face of Christ ourselves, and living out our inheritance as adopted children of God in baptism. We are using our imagination to reach out to others. We are being missionaries.

And as we begin a new year in the Church, there will be even more need for creative ways to become more effective missionaries. Please do not be disturbed by the challenges we face at this time. Jesus is Emmanuel, God amongst us. And Jesus chose to be God amongst us in the form of a helpless babe in Bethlehem. We too may feel helpless at times, especially in these days we live through, but these feelings should not overwhelm us. The mystery of Christmas invites us to be enfolded in the love made present to us, especially when we become poor in spirit.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

+ *David*, Bishop of Northampton



# Notices of Interest

**An Important Notice Regarding the Celebration of Mass and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:** Daily Mass in church will resume on Wednesday and will continue to be will be on the parish website and our parish Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/StGregsNorthampton>. The church is open every day from 9.00 am until 10.30 am; thanks to a generous anonymous donation, the heating will be on! Each day there is adoration of the Blessed Sacrament during this time.

**Christmas Eve for Children:** We would like to celebrate this Christmas Eve with an adaptation of the Christmas story. To do this we need volunteers to support for a morning or afternoon slot on Thursday 24th December. We also need older children (aged 12 and over) to take part in our event. If you are interested in helping or your child wishes to take part please email [stgregoryschristmaseve@outlook.com](mailto:stgregoryschristmaseve@outlook.com) by 1st December. We want to offer the best experience we can so need time to put everything in place!

**COVID-19 precautions** We are to be in 'tier 2' as we come out of lockdown, and as responsible members of our community, we obey the Government Regulations in solidarity with so many others on whom are being imposed restrictions which impact severely on their lives and livelihoods. Now that we can return to Mass, we must continue to try to suppress the spread of the virus and to support those who remain vulnerable.

**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.

**Gift Aid Envelopes:** Although we are not allowed to celebrate Mass, the Church will still be open daily from 9am until 10.30am for private prayer. **It would be very helpful if you could bring any green envelopes in during this time** and place them in either the CAFOD box by the office door (at the back of the Church) or in the candle money box to the left of the foyer door. Thank you!

**Repository:** We have a stock of Calendars, diaries and Christmas cards available. If you wish to buy any, please come to the Church between 9 and 10.30am and speak to a Steward who will show you what to do and where to go.

**Bible Alive** for November & December 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.

**St Gregory's Catholic Primary School.** If you have a child due to start primary school in September 2021, St Gregory's are welcoming parents to visit the school and see it in action. Contact 01604 403511 to arrange a visit. Closing date for place applications is 15th January 2021 at 5pm.

**NYMO** invite all young adults to an online advent retreat. Open to all aged 18-35yrs, each Tuesday of Advent, beginning on 1st December between 8.00-9.30pm join the team on zoom for a time of prayer, worship and reflection. Email [hello@nymo.org](mailto:hello@nymo.org) for more information.

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

**The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC),** of which CAFOD is an active member has launched a nationwide appeal for funds. Visit <https://cafod.org.uk/Give/Donate-to-Emergencies/Coronavirus-appeal> or use a CAFOD envelope and give through the parish.

**Exploring the Post-Lockdown Church:** The webinar series has been wonderful, and thank you to all who promoted it and came along throughout the series. We have had 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.

**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.

**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 contact Deacon Michael direct (01604) 647750, E-mail: [mvf@btinternet.com](mailto:mvf@btinternet.com) for information.

**First Holy Communion 2021:** If you have a child who wishes to make their 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Communion next year & are in school years 3-6, please email Stella at [swatts49@outlook.com](mailto:swatts49@outlook.com), who will note your name & the age & name of your child. This is still very much a first step as we are still very unsure of how we can prepare the children at the moment; so please be patient &, 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!

**Counters:** This week there is again no need for counters, but the rota will re-commence for 9<sup>th</sup> December!

**Parish Finances:** As colder weather is here & we need to turn the heating on, our finances will come under a bit of strain. We have kept solvent through the lockdown; great thanks to all who have been so generous.

**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)**

**Tip No. 116 Solidarity with the Poor:** the British Government has reduced the money it gives in Overseas Aid by one third! So will you help them fight Covid and hunger? [worldgifts.cafod.org.uk](http://worldgifts.cafod.org.uk) OR phone 0800 14 000 14

**Tip No. 117 Solidarity with the Poor:** In order to protect emerging industry in third world countries, the imported goods are taxed (which reduces charitable gifts of even medical equipment). We western nation citizens have no conception of the difficulties and depth of poverty our overseas cousins endure. [worldgifts.cafod.org.uk](http://worldgifts.cafod.org.uk) OR phone 0800 14 000 14

# Scripture Readings 29th November 2020, 1st Sunday of Advent, Year B

The reading from third Isaiah is part of a prayer written around the end of Israel's exile. Their leaders have been arguing instead of rebuilding the Temple. The prophet recalls God's blessings on Israel in the past, and desperately begs the Lord to come once more in his mercy to the aid of his people, who all now humbly confess their sinfulness. God is our Father, and we are clay, to be formed by his hand.

The Psalm pleads with God to restore his vineyard, Israel, to its former favour. Especially the northern tribes, threatened by Assyria.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians was prompted by internal rivalries. He can't stop talking about Jesus. God has now come, giving "all the graces" "through Jesus Christ", and joining us to his Son.

Since Vatican II we are blessed by reading all through each gospel in turn. Listening to what each evangelist actually says may help us to sense different Christian communities gradually developing their understanding of Christ. This Advent we start the year of Mark, whose gospel is the earliest and shortest. It is the gospel in which no human being recognises or understands Jesus before his death. Today we have Mark's version of "Stay awake!", immediately before Jesus' passion begins.

Psalm Response:

**God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.**

(Isa 63:16-17; 64:3-8; Ps 79:2-3,15-16,18-19; 1 Cor 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37)

*Chris Oliver*

## 6.00 pm. Daily Prayer

In union with the Church of England and other Christian denominations, we are asked to join in daily prayer during this lockdown, and daily intentions are suggested. We have a tradition of saying the Angelus at 6.00 each evening. We could make these prayers after saying the Angelus:

- Sunday:** Family, friends, and loved ones;
- Monday:** Schools and colleges, children, and young people;
- Tuesday:** The elderly, those who are isolated and vulnerable;
- Wednesday:** Businesses, the workplace, and economic wellbeing;
- Thursday:** The NHS and other key workers;
- Friday:** National and local governments;
- Saturday:** All who are grieving, those suffering with physical and mental health.

### A Prayer to say each day this week

Loving God,  
your Son Jesus Christ came that we might have life  
and have it abundantly;  
pour out your blessing upon our nation;  
where there is illness,  
bring your healing touch;  
where there is fear,  
strengthen us with the knowledge of your presence;  
where there is uncertainty,  
build us up in faith;  
where there is dishonesty,  
lead us into truth;  
where there is discord,  
may we know the harmony of your love;  
this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

### A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus

Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy.  
Sustain and support the anxious,  
be with those who care for the sick,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may find comfort  
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

### Bambinelli Sunday

St. John Paul II began a tradition early on in his papacy where he invited the children of Rome to assemble in St. Peter's Square on the Third Sunday of Advent during his Angelus address. He asked them to bring their little statue of the baby Jesus that would be placed in their Nativity set at home.

Both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have continued the tradition, and in recent years it has started to expand to other places outside of Rome.

It is a beautiful Advent tradition, one that sanctifies the home with the baby Jesus and makes his arrival in the manger scene an even more joyous event.



### **Bambinelli Sunday on 13<sup>th</sup> December**

**Bring your "Baby Jesus" to Mass on 13<sup>th</sup> December for a blessing.**

## The Cavalry is in sight!

The Government has spoken of the availability of a vaccine against COVID-19 as the arrival of the cavalry; in other words, as the solution to the disaster of the pandemic. Vaccination is important, not just for the person being vaccinated but for the community as a whole. It is estimated that if 92% of the population is vaccinated the disease can be eliminated.

Some years ago, Measles was eliminated as a disease in England, but

since 2018 it has re-appeared because the rate of vaccination declined. As a result, there has been a serious outbreak and patients have become seriously ill, and some have died.

Pope Francis has said that the vaccine should be for everyone, and has clearly stated that there are no moral objections to vaccination. There are wild conspiracy theories: for more information, have a look at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zgfgf82>

# Society for the Protection of Unborn Children- Prayer Group

Help us save the lives of unborn children. SPUC Northampton is actively looking for people to join the local branch. We meet every few weeks in order to plan and arrange pro-life initiatives.

This is a personal invitation for you to join us. We promise that there will be no pressure to do anything you are not comfortable with.

If you are unable to join the branch how would you feel about being a part of our prayer team? We are looking for people to form a prayer team who will support us through prayer on an ongoing basis and on special occasions.

All we ask is that you spend some time in prayer in support of our pro-life work. This can be done in the comfort of your own home or with others in the group.

If you would like to join the branch or join the prayer group then please contact William on 07393965643 (text is fine) or [wpcurrie@btinternet.com](mailto:wpcurrie@btinternet.com)

Prayer is a very powerful weapon in the fight to save our unborn children and we beseech Our Lady of Guadalupe to intercede for us in this battle.

Conference of England and Wales declared this year 2020 as: THE GOD WHO SPEAKS: A YEAR OF THE WORD” and chose the theme in line with the spirit of the document, Verbum Domini. This initiative will be continued through 2021, not least because of the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

## The God Who Speaks- Our Liturgy of the Word

A Series of 3 Online Zoom Sessions exploring the upcoming Lectionary Readings and Seasons of the Liturgical Year. A valuable opportunity to develop our engagement with the Scriptures that we hear proclaimed at the Liturgy of the Word at Mass. Led by Mgr Kevin McGinnell, Chair of the Diocesan Liturgy Commission and Alex Heath is Adviser for Adult Faith Formation

**Tuesday 17 November 2020**, (7.30-8.30 pm) Preparing the Way for the Lord. Mark’s Gospel & The Season of Advent

**Tuesday 19 January 2021**, (7.30-8.30 pm) ‘He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures’ (Lk 24:45) <sup>St. Ignace</sup> The importance of God’s Word for Christian identity & everyday living

**Tuesday 16 February 2021**, 7.30-8.30 pm: ‘Many more began to believe in him because of his Word’ (John 4:41) John’s Gospel & The Season of Lent

Each session will include input, prayer and the opportunity to make comments and ask questions. Cost: No charge but there will be the opportunity to make a donation. Please register in advance to secure a place by e mail or phone: email [admin@nores.org.uk](mailto:admin@nores.org.uk) Once you booking is received you will be sent details of how to join the online Zoom sessions.



## SECOND COLLECTIONS



13<sup>th</sup> September  
4<sup>th</sup> October  
11<sup>th</sup> October  
18<sup>th</sup> October  
15<sup>th</sup> November

Holy Places  
CAFOD  
Peter’s Pence  
World Mission  
World Communications

29<sup>th</sup> November

13<sup>th</sup> December

20<sup>th</sup> December

Day for Life

Home Mission

Sea Sunday