



# 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

# Fruitful discipleship

The word ‘fruit’ occurs nine times in St John’s Gospel, and seven of them are in the chapter that we are reading from in our Gospel passage for today; five in this section.

When we hear of fruit in spiritual terms we probably think of St Paul writing to the Galatians about the fruits of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These are important manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit, and all Christian disciples should be fruitful in this way.

However, St John is using the idea of ‘fruitfulness’ in a different context, and we need to examine the other two occasions when he speaks of fruit.

The first is in chapter 4 when he has the encounter with the woman at the well in Samaria. We reach the point in the story where the woman is wondering whether Jesus is the Messiah, and starts telling people about Jesus. She has already become a ‘missionary disciple’ even though her faith is not yet fully-formed.

Jesus’ ‘official’ disciples then come and join him, and characteristically fail to understand what he is really saying. Jesus speaks of the ‘fields ripe for harvesting’, which is a reference to the mission of Jesus, which will become the mission of the Church. It is in this context that Jesus speaks of ‘gathering fruit for eternal life’. Fruitfulness is in the mission-field.

The final scene of this story is told when we find that the words of the woman have indeed borne fruit and “many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony”. (*John 4:39*) This underlines the meaning of fruitfulness in the context of St John’s Gospel.

The second mention of fruit apart from in chapter 15 is to be found in chapter 12. We are in Holy Week, and Jesus says that the ‘hour for the Son of Man to be glorified has now come’. We know that he is speaking of his death and resurrection, and he continues: “unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit”. (*John 12:24*)

Jesus is not speaking of virtues here as the fruit of his death, but of souls — of people — of new disciples. We are again in the realm of the mission of Jesus: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”. (*John 10:10*)

We are, as so often in Jesus’ parables and teaching, in the area of agriculture. The stalks of wheat will produce between 35 and 50 grains; each a potential seed for the next generation. Thus, if there are 40 grains in the first generation, there will be 1,600 in the second, 64,000 in the third and over 2.5 million in the fourth!

This is very much the story of the Acts of the Apostles, as we read in the first reading: “the churches throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria were now left in peace, building themselves up, living in the fear of the Lord, and filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit.” (*Acts 9:31*)

Our Gospel today takes us to viticulture (the growing of vines). It is interesting that St John tells us of three specific areas in relation to fruitfulness; the story of the Samaritan woman revolves around water; the grain of wheat speaks of bread and the vine speaks of wine. In these three we see Baptism and the Eucharist; in which we see how we become a Christian and how we are sustained as Christians.

As branches of the vine, we are called to bear fruit, and, of course, our first thought about the fruit if the vine is in the fermented juice of the grape, but we should also remember that it is the fruit that bears the seed. Each grape has fewer seeds than those on a stalk of wheat, but the branch bears many more grapes!

The branch that does not bear fruit is pruned; however the Greek word used here has other meanings as well. It can mean ‘to humble’, in other words, to remove pride. It can also mean ‘to cleanse’; ‘to make clean’. Jesus says that we are ‘cleansed by the word I have spoken to you’, and he then goes on to tell us to ‘make our home’ in him. Later on he speaks more of this in his great prayer at the Last Supper. “As you, Father, are in me and I in you, may they be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (*John 17:21*)

We are brought back to missional fruitfulness. The purpose of all this is that ‘the world may believe’, just as the Gospel of John was written ‘that you may believe, and in believing, have life’. (*John 20:31*) “As the Father sent me, I am sending you”, says Jesus to us, (*John 20:21*) giving us our mission. If we need to be pruned, to be humbled, to be cleansed, through his word of absolution that can be done so that we can all be fruitful disciples, both in the sense that St Paul uses it and in the sense of the Gospel of St John.



# Notices of Interest

**Bible Alive** for Easter & May 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 10am & speak to a Steward who will show you what to do & where to go.

## 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:** The programme is running through 'Loom', an on line platform used by many schools. Parents need to 'home-school' children. The programme is called "Growing Up Catholic", and there are 6 sessions preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, followed by six sessions preparing for First Holy Communion.

**Confirmation:** At last we have a date: 1<sup>st</sup> October; feast of St Thérèse of Lisieux!

**Re-Envisioning Catechesis:** The Church has recently produced a new version of the "Directory for Catechesis", which makes clear the link between evangelisation & the teaching of the Faith. One fruit of this is that the diocesan department for catechesis has been moved from NORES to the new department for Mission. To help those engaged in Sacramental preparation, there will be an on line course over 5 consecutive Thursday evenings, starting 17<sup>th</sup> June 7.30 pm (ending at 8.45 pm) on Zoom. If anyone would like to take part, please let Fr Andrew know (by email, please), and the parish will make the booking.

**The Summer webinar series** Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 7.30pm.  
Diocesan Summer Webinar: Divine Renovation week 3, *Clearing out the junk* Reflecting on some of the baggage that holds us back in our faith lives and finding new inspiration in the Gospel, with well known speaker and writer Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ. You can find out more and register here:  
<https://readalong.divine.renovation.eventbrite.co.uk>.  
You can still find the Lent talks on the parish website and Facebook page based on a book entitled "Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic" by Matthew Kelly.

**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.

**Vianney Mission Prayer Group** will not meet during this time.

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

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

## GREGORY CARE

### Urgent Appeal for more Toiletries and Hygiene Products!

Over the last several weeks of this appeal we have had enormous support from St Gregory's parishioners for which the recipients are very grateful.

The toiletries and hygiene products you provide, not only support people by helping to maintain a hygiene standard that is a basic need for physical health but it also has a huge impact on a person's dignity, self worth and confidence; fundamental for good mental health.

This week was however the first week we had to pack away empty trays. As we did this, saying that's the end of all the stock, in came two more boxes! 'God does provide all our wants to be supplied' Although this all started during the pandemic which at last seems to be coming more under control there are still many families living in real hardship. When we report - 90 bags being delivered that equates to hundreds of people, while it is true we pack food parcels for some single people most are for families some with nine members. God has given us many different gifts and talents some of us have the means to donate items, some may have creative ideas of how we could raise money for this endeavour or secure some kind of sponsorship towards this project (if this is you, please let us know!) One way we can all be supportive and part of this effort is through prayer for the ongoing success of the food bank and all those it serves.

Please Pray.

**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)**

**Pro Life Chain - Saturday 29th May 2021:** On Saturday 29th May SPUC Northampton is holding a Pro Life Chain on St Peters Way Northampton. This act of silent witness is to remember the millions of lives lost to abortion since the Abortion Act 1967. It will take place between 11am and 1pm. Please consider joining us at this important event. Last year twelve pro-life supporters stood together in order to proclaim the pro-life message. It is not easy to take part in a public display in relation to such a controversial subject, but it is so important that we speak up for the most vulnerable in society, the unborn. If you can join us or want more information then please contact William on 07393965643(text is fine) or [wpcurrie@btinternet.com](mailto:wpcurrie@btinternet.com)  
Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.



**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.

**Alpha Works!** Our present on-line Alpha course ends this week, but in the autumn, all being well, we hope to be running another in-person Alpha course. For this we will need helpers on the catering front to support our team of leaders. Please think about this – apart from the value of what is done, it is great fun!

# Scripture Readings 1st May 2021, 5th Sunday of Easter, Year B

Much has happened in Acts since last Sunday's reading: Peter and some apostles have been imprisoned and beaten before being set free again. Seven Greeks were appointed to look after the Hellenists – apparently Greek-speaking Christians. Stephen was arrested and his speech to the Jewish leaders suggests that the Hellenists were persecuted by the Jews because they did not join in the Temple worship. They were driven out to Judea and Samaria – and so the Gospel began to spread.

Today we hear how Paul returns from his conversion near Damascus. He is accepted by the Hebrew Christians, but not by the Hellenists, so has to be hustled out of town.

The ending of this Messianic Psalm, uttered by Our Lord on the Cross, rejoices in the triumph of God's justice: God's promises to Israel are fulfilled in Jesus.

In his first Letter John insists that we must show our faith by our actions: keeping God's commandments. We can be sure we are doing right if we obey our conscience guided by God's Spirit dwelling in us.

In John's gospel Jesus gives his disciples detailed teaching at the last supper, just before his arrest. We must be bound closely to Christ: He is the vine, we are the branches, gaining sustenance and support from him.

Psalm Response: **You, Lord, are my praise in the great assembly.**

(Acts 9: 26-31 ; Ps 21(22) ; 1 John 3: 18-24 ; John 15: 1-8)

*Chris Oliver*

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## Kitchen Makeover

Work is continuing in the task of upgrading the kitchen; both the kitchen and the store-room have been cleared out and much has gone to the recycling centre. It will take several weeks to accomplish, and thanks must go to those who have already given time to this work.

Volunteer labour will be gratefully received in due course. Cliff Snelling will project-manage the operation, and specific requests for help will come from time to time. We plan to complete this during the time that the hall remains closed due to the restrictions, and have it ready for when we can re-open for our normal use.



### Narthex revamp

The map which has been in the narthex for many years was intended to be a reminder of the global nature of the Church, and that we have people at St Gregory's whose original home was far away from here. The plan is that on the boards either side of the door will be the message "Welcome" in the language of every place represented here. You may be asked to help!

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## Our Carbon Footprint

With the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) being hosted in Glasgow this November, our minds are frequently drawn back to the need to make ethical and charitable choices in regards to energy usage as a response, in faith, to the call from the pope to care for our common home and live as guardians of creation.

Our carbon footprint is how much **WE CAUSE climate change** personally.

The way to improve our personal carbon footprint: did you know that flying puts as much CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere as a using a petrol or diesel car for a year. It would be better to drive a Hybrid or fully electric car as that is a great help.

Walking, cycling, bus and using trains (even to go across Europe) is ideal.

There is a saying: "Repair, Reuse, Recycle". When you have finished with it – give it to a charity shop.

**Spring tip:** Do not buy new garden furniture ..... Paint last year's. There is a paint for wooden furniture and a paint for metal that goes over rust and corrosion. You will be so pleased with the results.

**Mend and maintain** so we take less from Mother Earth. Only take what is absolutely essential to our life. It is to be welcomed that there is a growing trend to repair rather than to throw away.

Do it for your children and grandchildren's future; don't make their lives a misery.

As a parish we are doing our best to reduce our carbon footprint. Many have expressed delight that our green gas is a byproduct of drinking gin, and have promised to keep up the supply!

#### What is green gas?

Our green gas is a natural by-product from gin distillation. The waste organic matter, which would otherwise be left to decompose and release its greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, undergoes anaerobic digestion and then is cleaned to produce a near-pure gas which is fed into the national grid. This biomethane is both renewable and sustainable.

Working as a collective, all 22 dioceses of England and Wales are on a common contract delivering 100% renewable electricity, powered by wind and hydro, and 71% green gas with the remaining 29% offset.

In 2021, with an ever increasing number of schools joining the scheme, the size of the group is equivalent to supplying the annual needs of more than 20,000 households — the size of a small town — and, most importantly, reduces the carbon emissions equivalent to taking 23,000 cars off the road each year.

All this has been achieved by working in solidarity; by coming together to harness the collective buying power of each parish, and now the schools too. The Church really is leading the way — this is the largest green gas contract in the UK, and it's getting even bigger.



## SECOND COLLECTIONS 2021

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