



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

Parables of the Kingdom

For the last two Sundays and today our Gospel readings come from Chapter 13 of Matthew's Gospel, and are a collection of parables. We heard the Sower and the Mustard Seed, the Wheat and the Darnel, and this week we hear of the hidden treasure in the field, the valuable pearl and the dragnet. Each of these parables begins: "The kingdom of heaven is like . . ." In every case we are given a description of the kingdom, not a definition. Each of them provides us with a glimpse of what the kingdom is like, but none of them gives us the whole story. It is as though we are seeing the same thing from different angles. We are not told that if we added them all together we would have the whole picture of God's Kingdom.

Another picture of the Kingdom is given in the preface to the Eucharistic Prayer on the feast of Christ the King.

An eternal and universal kingdom,
a kingdom of truth and life,
a kingdom of holiness and grace,
a kingdom of justice, love and peace

We are told to pray: "Thy Kingdom come", and if it is reasonable to link the two petitions, "Thy Kingdom come" and "Thy will be done on earth", then our prayer — Jesus' command that we pray — is that the Kingdom of God may be established on earth

The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks of the Kingdom.

Everyone is called to enter the kingdom. First announced to the children of Israel, this messianic kingdom is intended to accept people of all nations. To enter it, one must first accept Jesus' word:

The word of the Lord is compared to a seed which is sown in a field; those who hear it with faith and are numbered among the little flock of Christ have truly received the kingdom. Then, by its own power, the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest.

The kingdom belongs to the poor and lowly, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor"; he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To them - the "little ones" - the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned. Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation. Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom.

Jesus invites sinners to the table of the kingdom: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father's boundless mercy for them and the vast "joy in heaven over one sinner who repents" The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life "for the forgiveness of sins".

Jesus' invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of parables, a characteristic feature of his teaching. Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything. Words are not enough, deeds are required. The parables are like mirrors for us: will we be hard soil or good earth for the word? What use have we made of the talents we have received? Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is become a disciple of Christ, in order to "know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven". For those who stay "outside", everything remains enigmatic.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church §543 – 546)

The parables are more than just descriptions: the passage from the Catechism begins "Everyone is called to enter the Kingdom". The parables are also invitations to enter the kingdom, to become a disciple of the Kingdom as the final part of today's Gospel indicates: "Every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom . . ."

The translation in the Jerusalem Bible, from which we are currently reading somewhat simplifies the Greek text. The ESV, from which we will be reading soon (from Advent 2024) gives it thus: "every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven", which indicates that this is not just a response to a direct impulse from God, but involves something more. The word which creates the difficulty in translation is closely related to the word in Matthew 28:19, usually translated as: "Go and make disciples", but actually implies not an instantaneous conversion but a time of training, or 'discipling'.

The 'New Evangelisation' speaks of 'accompaniment' as part of the evangelisation process. It means walking together on the pilgrim way; it means spending time together, and becoming 'companions' (literally, people who share bread together).

Our Gospel for next week (*Matthew 14:13-21*) tells of how Jesus and the closest disciples, after the death of John the Baptist, "went by boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves". This was surely one of those occasions where Jesus was 'discipling' his apostles; teaching them, guiding them, training them for the kingdom of heaven, accompanying them in their journey of faith. As the Gospel next week will tell us, this was interrupted, as all too often happens to us, but is a vital part of the process of evangelisation.

One opportunity for this has been in the Bible Study courses that were interrupted by the pandemic, but which we hope to resume in the autumn. More information will come in the next few weeks. All are invited.

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.

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!
Contact Kath.healey.789@gmail.com.

Bible Alive for August & September is now available - only £3.00! If you wish to purchase a copy, they are in the narthex as you come into church.

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.

Thursday Holy Hour & Adoration: Holy Hour remains as Holy Two Hours, from 9am until 11am. It is important that at least two people are present throughout the time of adoration.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be reported here shortly. Please note you will need to phone Deacon Michael on 07999808997 before you attend, to book a place.

First Holy Communion 2023: Enrolment for 2024 will be Sunday 8th Oct. after the 11am Mass. There will be a welcome to the children who are registered & their parents at the 11am Mass on Sunday 5th Nov. All sessions will be on Saturday afternoons at Sacred Heart, Weston Favell. Details, dates and times will be available at the registration. Please see the separate article on the way the programme works.

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

Men's Walk: Monday evenings there is a walk for any men who would like to come along, no ongoing commitment required & those interested can come along to join whenever they are available. There is also an element of prayer & socialising some weeks as time allows. For more info about times & routes each week please contact Alex on 07963032175.

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

Choir and Musicians: A hearty thank you to everyone who took part in our Songs of Praise afternoon at the Crescent Care Home. It was a joy to share some of our favourite hymns and Alec's funny cat stories with the residents. Christmas carols next time!
Ro and Alec

Choir Notes: our next practice is after evening Mass on the Holy Day of the Assumption of Our Lady 15th Aug.

Missio Matters: Pennies from Heaven? After Sunday Mass (16th July) I made the mistake of getting on the weighing scales & found I had put on 4 pounds (about 2kg) that morning! Then I realised that I was holding a heavy red box in my hands - hence my weight increase. Unfortunately the donor handed this in before 9am Mass but no one knows who it was & there was no name on the box. I would be grateful if that person could give their name to Deacon Michael or Dorothy (at 9am) or me (at 11am) so that I can thank them & keep our records straight. *Alec*

Pilgrimage of Reparation & Prayer for the Sanctity of Life, to Walsingham: Sat. 5th August, led by Archbishop Kevin McDonald. For details see the poster on the noticeboard, or go to www.prolifepilgrimage.org. Please join in the 'great prayer for life' asked for by Pope Saint John Paul II.

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.

Tots @ St Gregory's: Our last session this term was on Tuesday 18th July. We start again on Tuesday 12th September at 9:30.

Dog lovers wanted! Hearing Dogs for Deaf People urgently need volunteers to care for and help train their gorgeous puppies. For more information, ring 01844 348122 or email volunteer@hearingdogs.org.uk

Parish Finances: At the end of the first quarter of the financial year (April to June) our finances have been fairly stable - we have had a small surplus of £317.35. 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)**

URGENT NOTE ON FINANCES

If you have transferred to standing orders and pay income tax please contact Fr Andrew (preferably by email) so that the Gift Aid can be linked to your donation. Claims can only be made for up to three years, so there is some urgency about this.

Refreshment Donations: Below is the schedule for refreshment donations through the year:

From the first Sunday in Advent to the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord:	The Hope Centre
From the Second Sunday in ordinary time to the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday:	Gregory Care
Through Lent and Eastertide:	CAFOD
Ordinary Time until the end of August:	Refreshment Fund
September until the Harvest collection:	CAFOD
After harvest until the beginning of Advent:	The Bible Society

Alpha in the Autumn: The sessions will start in September, and 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. Please register at www.stgregory.org.uk/alpha and the zoom link will be sent out in the week before each session. For any who live far away, we are sorry if you are unable to get to the 'face-to-face' session on 12th September, please do not let this put you off joining the course.

Mission Prayer

Heavenly Father
it is your will that we should make disciples of all nations.
We ask you to bless the mission of our Diocese of Northampton and guide our hearts and minds
so that your will might be done
and your kingdom be build up here on earth.
We pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit,
without which our work is in vain,
and we entrust ourselves to your beloved Son,
for we know that he is with us for all time, now and for ever.
Amen.

Assembly Insight

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation."
(1 Peter 2:9)

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 30th July 2023, 17th Sunday of Year A

After David's death his son, Solomon, became king. Until Solomon built the Temple, sacrificing to God in high places was acceptable. It was during one such sacrifice that God appeared in a dream asking Solomon what he most wanted. In humility Solomon asked for a discerning judgement, rightly earning God's praise.

The Psalm praises God's law as the supreme rule for life because it is designed to help us become who we are meant to be.

Paul continues describing life in the Spirit to the Romans. Christians should try to reproduce in themselves images of Christ by progressively sharing in his risen life. God prepares those called to do his work and cooperates with them. Each individual is called for some task in God's plan for salvation. Those who love him will share in his glory. This includes not only Christians

and others of goodwill, but also the Jews, "the ones he chose specially long ago".

Matthew's Gospel compares the Kingdom of Heaven to the greatest treasure found either accidentally or after a search, and then compares the Kingdom to a dragnet: the good fish will be kept and those of no use will be thrown in the furnace. There is a surprise ending: not all old treasures should be thrown away, some should be kept – like Israel's Scriptures, our Old Testament.

Psalm Response:

Lord, how I love your law!

(1 Kgs 3:5,7-12; Ps 118(119); Rom 8:28-30; Mt 13:44-52)

Chris Oliver

How is the Diocese funded?

The diocese has no income of its own, it is totally reliant on the parishes for all its needs.

Every parish pays money each month to the Diocese to cover the expenses that are incurred on behalf of the parishes, schools and other agencies which serve the parishes of the diocese.

Even before lockdown, Diocesan reserves were very low, and coming out of the pandemic the situation is even more extreme, and parishes have needed to increase their contributions.

Fynnius Fogg Evening

Tickets will be available after Mass today at £12:50 for the fund-raising evening at the Cathedral Hall on 2nd September. This is to raise money for the Foodstore – Supper is included! (And a bar). Many of you will have seen them before and know what a fabulous evening it will be! We will also be collecting Tombola prizes over the next few weeks so if anyone has any new items suitable to donate please put them in the toiletry box at the back of church.

A Shrine Church Casting Off Towards Renewal

(“How Divine Renovation is making changes in parishes in England as well as throughout the world.”)

St. Dominic and Our Lady of the Rosary Shrine is a place of pilgrimage as well as a parish for its locality in Haverstock Hill, London. 17 side chapels and 20 altars make the church bigger than some cathedrals in England. Run by Dominicans, Father Lawrence Lew, OP is the Parish Priest, Rector of the shrine, Prior of the Dominican community, and Promoter General of the rosary.

Raised in a strongly evangelical protestant home in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Father Lawrence converted to Catholicism in his teen years. His personal experience of the Eucharist was powerful: “Becoming a Catholic changed my life, and it became a lifelong adventure.” Despite beginning his post-secondary studies in law, he was drawn to serve with the Dominicans and eventually joined the religious order.

St. Dominic's is in an unusual position compared to most parishes – instead of facing amalgamations of multiple parishes with only one priest, St. Dominic's is one church with 6 priests (run by the Dominicans). However, lay leaders and volunteers are in short supply. As the Shrine of the Rosary is a place of pilgrimage in a busy cosmopolitan city, the church has a high turnover of parishioners.

The region also has some of its own challenges. The number of families has gone down due to the high cost of living: “the local government has closed one of the primary schools in our area – one each year for the last 4 years.” Due to the lack of affordable housing, young adults attending the parish often move once they get married and begin having children. On top of this, the overall number of Catholics in the parish is declining and many of his parishioners travel in from other communities.

Father Philip Connor, a friend of Father Lawrence's and the current parish priest of Christ the Good Shepherd in Cumbria, UK, has been accompanied by Divine Renovation for many years. After seeing the fruit in his parish, Father Lawrence became interested in Divine Renovation based on Father Philip's parish renewal.

Father Lawrence relates his holy discontent, “I was unhappy with the state of catechesis in my parish.” With parents coming to him for a signature to prove alleged Mass attendance for school applications rather than a desire for active faith formation, some seemed more interested in marking developmental milestones, than mission.

“I can't be pandering to your cultural Catholicism anymore... I am not pushing anybody away. On the contrary I want people to actually come.” He welcomes his parishioners, “It's wonderful that you are here. Let's see more of you.”

“I decided to give Divine Renovation a try” and has just started group coaching. His brothers who serve as priests in the parish have also joined: “I just said to my brothers in the order, how about we just sign up for Kickstart (group coaching) and see how it goes.” His goal: “I want us all to be on the same page about having an evangelical parish.”

Father Lawrence speaks to Mary's missional example for the Church:

“We cannot give what we do not have. So Mary teaches us to first ponder God's Word in our heart, to treasure the Father's promises, and to be receptive to the Holy Spirit. Only after we have contemplated God in our lives can we then go out and lead others to Christ, saying with Mary, ‘Do whatever He tells you.’”

The Three Bees — The sign of the welcoming Church



Belong



Believe



Behave

Remember that belonging comes first!