



# 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

## Time to say *“Thank You”*

Christmas is a time for giving, and St Gregory’s Parish is a wonderfully generous parish in so many ways. Your generous Christmas offering to the priest is just one of many aspects of this generosity. Week by week, food is given for the Hope Centre and toiletries for the Cathedral Food Larder; second collections are supported, St Gregory’s is among the foremost givers in the Diocese to Missio and CAFOD, and whenever there is a special appeal there is always a magnificent response.

Many people have contributed time and skills to make this Christmas celebration a wonderful time, cleaning, decorating, singing, playing music, serving, reading, and in so many other ways. All your kindness and generosity is recognised in the CAFOD world gift of clean water for ten families that is repeated from last week’s newsletter. A big “thank you” to everyone for presents and for presence! It is very much appreciated.

## The Holy Family

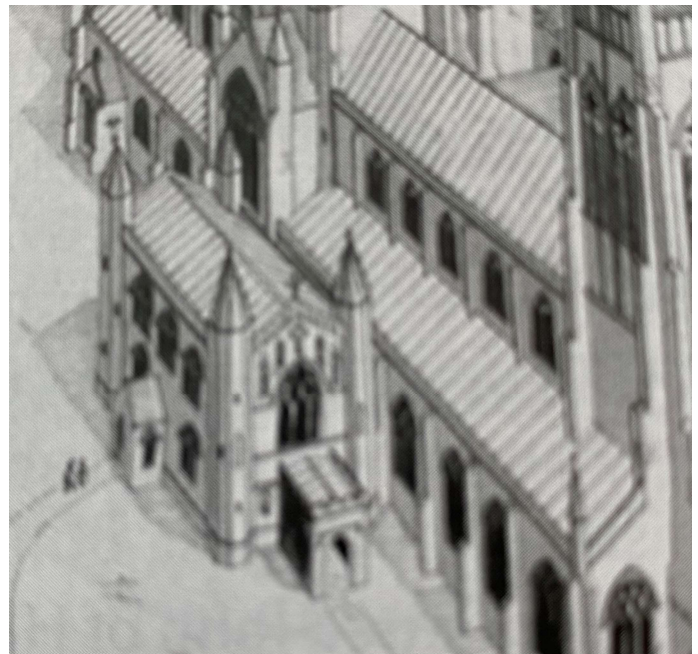
According to the song written by Edward Pola and George Wyle, Christmas is ‘the most wonderful time of the year’. The words completely miss the point of Christmas — there is no mention of Jesus at all — but the focus is on community life, with ‘parties for hosting and marshmallows for toasting’, with ‘much mistletoeing and hearts will be glowing’ and when ‘there’ll be scary ghost stories and tales of the glories of Christmases long ago’.

While it is tempting for the Christian to simply dismiss the celebration of the crooners who enjoy a ‘white Christmas’ and the many other secular seasonal songs, it is important to recognise the remnant of Christian faith and practice that is there. The Church’s celebration this Sunday speaks of the same sentiments as the song contains, but the difference is that Jesus is at the centre of it.

The mention of ‘scary ghost stories’ as a part of the Christmas festivities may well owe its origin to Charles Dickens’ ‘A Christmas Carol’, in which four ghosts visit Ebenezer Scrooge, and ultimately succeed in changing him from the miser he was to a generous human being. Dickens is sometimes regarded as the inventor of the modern Christmas celebration. Two years after he had written the story of Scrooge and the Cratchit family, he wrote a book for his own children, “The Life of Our Lord”, although it was not published until 1934.

It was around that time that there was a renewed interest in Dickens’ own family life. He had separated from his wife in 1858, which had caused a scandal at the time, and the full extent of story remains uncertain, but it is generally accepted that Dickens did not behave entirely honourably in relation to his family.

The feast we celebrate today reminds us that we have a model of family life in the Holy Family of Nazareth. In our own families, may Jesus be truly at the centre — “The reason for the season”!



*An impression of the shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham before the destruction by Henry VIII, by John Denny, reproduced from “Walsingham: Pilgrims and Pilgrimage” by Fr Michael Rear. The protecting building over the Holy House was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. On the right of the picture can be seen part of the Augustinian priory of which only the arch remains standing now. The Holy House was built as a replica of that in which the Holy Family lived in Nazareth.*

**Wishing you every blessing for 2024**



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## 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 The Holy Family Parish Mass Book - Year B Page 41

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Sunday <i>The Holy Family</i>	9.00 am 11.00 am 5.00 pm	Mass Mass Mass (Syro Malabar Rite)	The Parish Julie Moriarty RIP
Monday <i>Mary, Mother of God</i> <i>(Page 44)</i>	9.00 am	Mass	Jim Deegard's Intentions
Tuesday Ss Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen	9.00 am	Mass	Goretti Smith's Intentions
Wednesday Feria	9.00 am 12.30 pm	Mass Funeral Mass	Thanksgiving Paul Sefton RIP
Thursday Feria	9-11 am 7.00 pm	Holy Hours of Adoration Mass	James Poddington RIP
Friday Feria	9.00 am	Mass	Paul Sefton RIP
Saturday Feria	9.00 am 9.45 am 5.00 pm	Mass Confessions Ukrainian Mass	Elspeth Joyce RIP
Sunday <i>The Epiphany of The Lord</i>	9.00 am 11.00 am  1.00 pm 5.00 pm	Mass Mass  Mass in Shona Mass (Syro-Malabar Rite)	The Parish Julia & Vittorio Ruocco

**Your Offering to the Parish:** Last Sunday's collection was £444.55. Thank you!  
**Standing Order gifts to the Parish:** Each week £580 is given through standing orders.  
**Donations through the Diocese:** An average of £90 is given each week.  
**Gift Aid benefits to the parish:** The value of Gift Aid averages £136 per week.  
**Cleaners This Week:** The Church is cleaned and sanitised on a regular basis.  
**Counters this Week:** CC & CP

**Readings for this Sunday** – see inside for details

**Ecclesiasticus 3: 2-6, 12-14:** *He who fears the Lord respects his parents.*  
**Colossians 3: 12-21:** *Family life in the Lord.*  
**Genesis 15: 1-6, 21: 1-3:** *Your heir shall be your own flesh and blood.*

**Readings for next Sunday**

**Isaiah 6: 1-6; Ephesians 3: 2-3, 5-6; Matthew 2: 1-12. (Page 49)**

**During this season of Advent, we are Asked to pray for:** Migrants & Refugees; Open-ness to God's Word  
The Bishop, Clergy & People of the Diocese;  
Expectant Mothers.

### Further Heating Update

There has been a great deal of work going on to determine exactly the best way of restoring the full heating capacity — sadly heat pumps are at present not effective enough to give us sufficient heat unless we could exclude all draughts and double-glaze all the windows. However the government are seeking to move towards mixing hydrogen in the gas fuel, which has a zero-carbon emission. We are still hoping that the work can be completed within a week sometime in January. We are grateful for the loan of a space heater resembling a jet engine and powered by jet fuel which does make a difference.

In the meanwhile, please try to keep such heat as we have in and the cold out; please do not leave doors open, and come well padded-up!

We have had an estimate of the cost which is rather more than had been hoped. However, if each family attending Mass could increase their giving by just £1 a week, the cost would be recouped in a year. Specific donations are also most welcome.

A number of people have made kind offers to help pay for the new boiler; these are most appreciated. The cost will be considerable, and both specific donations and/or increased weekly giving will be gratefully received!

#### Please Pray for the Sick:


#### **Anniversaries:**

##### May they Rest in Peace

Josephine Morby	Frederick Nicholson
Kate Sykes	John Flynn
George Rosatti	Thomas Moran
Ellen Jubb	Mary O'Grady
Agnes Hilliard	Mary Tydings
Julie Moriarty	Noeleen O'Connor
Charles Bradley	Minnie Borman
George Janecki	John Griffin
Christopher Bosworth	Rose Robinson
Gabriel Ogbata	Ken Gray
Georgina Hill	Elena Langdale
Kathleen Leare	Maud Caillebotte
Noreen O'Connor	June Janecki
Charlotte Glibbery	Lucy Duke
Patrick Greene	Arnold Darby
Victoria Habib	Heather Peterson
Michael McCrossan	Jean Evans

#### **POPE'S PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR DECEMBER:**

We pray that people living with disabilities may be at the centre of attention in society, and that institutions may offer inclusive programs which value their active participation.

# Notices of Interest

**Repository:** The Repository is open after Sunday masses for the sale of cards and religious goods. We still need more helpers especially after 9am Mass. I want to express a huge thank you to the loyal band who make the whole enterprise possible! Thanks to them & the great support from parishioners we again have an annual profit of over £1000 which is being donated to our parish charities & to the Hope Centre. Any queries or volunteers to 01604 629103 or [Kath.healey.789@gmail.com](mailto:Kath.healey.789@gmail.com)

**Bible Alive** for January is now available - only £3.00! If you wish to purchase a copy, they are in the narthex as you come into church. December is now sold out! There are, however, several small booklets of Walk with Me available for Advent. Please see the table in the Narthex.

## Donorbox

St. Gregory's has now signed up with Donorbox to enable people to make donations to the Church via a QR code (see below).

This is a safe & easy way of making a one-off donation without having to have cash on you! If you have a smartphone, just point your camera at the QR code, click the link & the site will see you through the donation process.

There is a larger version of this QR code in the Narthex area and in the hall for refreshment donations!



**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. During cold weather, Adoration will be in the Sacristy.

**Cathedral Foodstore:** Our continued thanks to all who donate to the toiletries for the Foodstore. Please remember that the Foodstore is open to everyone who may be experiencing hardship. Food can be purchased at substantially reduced prices (as it now operates as a food larder) All that is required is a form of ID and a genuine reason for needing to use the larder. It operates between 10:15 - 12:15 every Thursday in the St Thomas Centre (behind the Cathedral).

**Church Cleaning:** Helpers are needed to clean the Church on the last Saturday of every month (next - Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024), after the morning Mass. All welcome, especially younger, more energetic ones!

**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 Hall, from 10am-11am.

**Tots @ St Gregory's:** St Greg's Tiny Tots runs each Tuesday in term time from 9:30-11:30 in the church hall. We charge £1 per group which includes snacks & coffee! If you have care of a pre-school child, please join us!!

**Missio:** All supporters have collected their calendars for 2024 or had them delivered. There are some spare ones in the Red Box on the table on the left hand side of the porch as you come into church. All they cost is your promise to say a prayer for those working on the Foreign Missions; if you want to make a donation towards this work see Dorothy (9am) or Alec (11am) or one of the clergy.

**Fire Safety — Important notice.** Unlit candles **must not** be placed on the trays under the places for candles and candles must not be stacked one on top of another.

**Bookings are open** for Lux 2024. For school years 7 to 13. Our theme this year is Dive. See the website for more information and to book: <https://nymo.org/lux-dive/>. If you have any questions then please email [info@nymo.org](mailto:info@nymo.org).

## SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

**Baptism Preparation:** The next session will be on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 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:** All sessions are on Saturday afternoons at Sacred Heart, Weston Favell. Details, dates, times have been given to all those who are registered.

**Confirmation in 2024:** To be announced.

**Mission Northampton:** There will be a weekly Zoom course entitled "Secrets of Paul", lasting 10 weeks on Wednesdays starting on 10<sup>th</sup> January and running until 20<sup>th</sup> March (with a break for half-term on 21<sup>st</sup> February). There is a charge of £10 for the course, & visit <https://northamptondiocese.org/courses/secrets-of-paul-online/> to register.

## Refreshment Donations:

Below is the schedule for refreshment donations through the year: *The Hope Centre*

<i>From the first Sunday in Advent</i>	Gregory Care
<i>to the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord:</i>	
From the Second Sunday in ordinary time	
to the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday:	
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

## 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

## Prayer for Peace for Ukraine and the Holy Land:

Please continue to pray for an end to wars, and for all victims of war:

**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

To say 'Thank you' to all parishioners and friends



The parish has bought a clean water supply for ten families through CAFOD World gifts. This life-saving charity gift can provide families with a steady supply of clean, safe water for drinking and cooking. Using a water pump also means families can wash in clean water, keeping everyone safe from infection.

If you wish to give a gift through CAFOD, follow this link, and you will receive a free tote bag with your order.

[https://worldgifts2018.myshopify.com/a/app/referrals/referrals/4f5e4c7d-9825-403d-b25c-19cb4cfea416/referee\\_redemption](https://worldgifts2018.myshopify.com/a/app/referrals/referrals/4f5e4c7d-9825-403d-b25c-19cb4cfea416/referee_redemption)

## Nellie Carroll RIP

With sorrow we record the death of Mrs Carroll; she will be buried in Ireland, and funeral arrangements will be announced as soon as they are known. May she rest in peace.



# The Holy Family, Sunday after Christmas Year B

God responds to Abram's concern at his lack of heirs by promising him countless descendants. Even before male circumcision became a sign of this covenant, Abram was held righteous because he trusted in the Lord's promise. Such was his faith that he travelled to a new land, and believed God's promise of a son even in his old age. Sarah named their son Isaac, meaning "he who laughed": Sarah had laughed at God's promise that she would bear a son – now she perhaps feels the laugh is on her, caring for a new-born child in her nineties.

The Psalm praises God's goodness to his people, recounting His promises and care for them.

The letter to the Hebrews describes how Abraham's faith was strong enough for the supreme test: would he sacrifice his son – his only

son – to God? Just as God sacrificed his only son on the Cross to show how much he loves us.

Luke's description of the consecration to God of Jesus, as Mary's first-born son, links Jesus' birth to God's promises: the promised redeemer has come, and Abraham's descendants in faith will indeed be as numerous as the stars. But God is always faithful to his promises and, in his justice, innermost thoughts will be revealed.

Psalm Response: **He, the Lord, is our God, He remembers his covenant for ever.**

(Genesis 15:1-6, 21:1-3; Psalm 104 (105):1 -6. 8-9; Hebrews 11:8,11 -12, 17 -19; Luke 2:22-40)

Chris Oliver

## The Prayer of Meditation

For a Christian, to "meditate" is to seek meaning: it implies placing oneself before the immense page of Revelation to try to make it our own, assuming it completely. And the Christian, after having welcomed the Word of God, does not keep it closed up within him or herself, because that Word must be met with "another book", which the Catechism calls "the book of life" (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2706). This is what we try to do every time we meditate on the Word.

The practice of meditation has received a great deal of attention in recent years. It is not only Christians who talk about it: the practice of meditation exists in almost all the world's religions. But it is also a widespread activity among people who do not have a religious view of life. We all need to meditate, to reflect, to discover ourselves, it is a human dynamic. Especially in the voracious western world, people seek meditation because it represents a barrier raised against the daily stress and emptiness that is rife everywhere.

But we realise that this word, once accepted in a Christian context, takes on a uniqueness that must not be eradicated. Meditating is a necessary human dimension, but meditating in the Christian context goes further: it is a dimension that must not be eradicated. The great door through which the prayer of a baptised person passes — let us remind ourselves once again — is Jesus Christ. For the Christian, meditation enters through the door of Jesus Christ. The practice of meditation also follows this path. And when Christians pray, they do not aspire to full self-transparency, they do not seek the deepest centre of the ego. This is legitimate, but the Christian seeks something else. The prayer of the Christian is first of all an encounter with the Other, with a capital "O": the transcendent encounter with God. If an experience of prayer gives us inner peace, or self-mastery, or clarity about the path to take, these results are, so to speak, side effects of the grace of Christian prayer, which is the encounter with Jesus. That is, meditating means going to the encounter with Jesus, guided by a phrase or a word from Holy Scripture.

Throughout history, the term "meditation" has had various meanings. Even within Christianity it refers to different spiritual experiences. Nevertheless, some common lines can be traced, and in this we are helped again by the Catechism, which says the following: "There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters... But a method is only a guide; the important thing is to advance, with the Holy Spirit, along the one way of prayer: Christ Jesus" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2707). And here, a travelling companion is indicated, one who guides us: the Holy Spirit. Christian meditation is not possible without the Holy Spirit.

It is he who guides us to the encounter with Jesus. Jesus said to us, "I will send you the Holy Spirit. He will teach you and explain to you". (*John 14:26*) And in meditation too, the Holy Spirit is the guide to going forward in our encounter with Jesus Christ.

Thus, there are many methods of Christian meditation: some are very simple, others more detailed; some highlight the intellectual dimension of

the person, others the affective and emotional one instead. They are methods. They are all important and all worthy of practice, inasmuch as they can help the experience of faith to become an integral act of the person: one does not only pray with the mind; the entire person prays, the person in his or her entirety, just as one does not pray only with one's feelings. The ancients used to say that the organ of prayer is the heart, and thus they explained that the whole person, starting from the centre — the heart — enters into a relationship with God, not just a few faculties. The methods of meditation are paths to travel in order to arrive at the encounter with Jesus, but if you stop on the road, and just look at the path, you will never find Jesus. You will make a "god" out of the path. However, the path is a means to bring you to Jesus. The Catechism specifies: "Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion and desire. This mobilisation of the faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2708).

Here, then, is the grace of Christian prayer: Christ is not far away, but is always in a relationship with us. There is no aspect of his divine-human person that cannot become a place of salvation and happiness for us. Every moment of Jesus' earthly life, through the grace of prayer, can become immediate to us, thanks to the Holy Spirit, the guide. But, you know, one cannot pray without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is he who guides us! And thanks to the Holy Spirit, we too are present at the River Jordan when Jesus immerses himself to receive baptism. We too are guests at the wedding at Cana, when Jesus gives the best wine for the happiness of the couple, that is, it is the Holy Spirit who connects us with these mysteries of the life of Christ because in contemplation of Jesus we experience prayer, to join us more closely to him. We too are astonished onlookers of the thousands of healings performed by the Master.

We take the Gospel, and meditate on those mysteries in the Gospel, and the Spirit guides us to being present there. And in prayer — when we pray — we are all like the cleansed leper, the blind Bartimaeus who regains his sight, Lazarus who comes out of the tomb. We too are healed by prayer just as the blind Bartimaeus was healed, the other one, the leper... We too rose again, as Lazarus rose again, because prayer of meditation guided by the Holy Spirit leads us to relive these mysteries of the life of Christ and to encounter Christ, and to say, with the blind man, "Lord, have pity on me! Have pity on me!" — "And what do you want?" — "To see, to enter into that dialogue". And Christian meditation, led by the Spirit, leads us to this dialogue with Jesus. There is no page of the Gospel in which there is no place for us. For us Christians, meditating is a way to encounter Jesus. And in this way, only in this way, we rediscover ourselves. And this is not a withdrawing into ourselves, no: going to Jesus, and from Jesus, discovering ourselves, healed, risen, strong by the grace of Jesus. And encountering Jesus, the Saviour of all, myself included. And this, thanks to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

(Pope Francis: General Audience, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021)