



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

Pentecost

The celebration of Pentecost began as an agricultural feast. Its first mention is in the book of Exodus: “You shall observe the festival of Weeks, the first-fruits of the wheat harvest.” (*Exodus 34:22*) We learn more about this in the book of Deuteronomy: “You shall count seven weeks, begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put in to the standing grain. Then you shall keep the festival of Weeks to the Lord your God, contributing a free-will offering in proportion to the blessing that you have received from the Lord your God. Rejoice before the Lord your God — you and your sons and daughters, male and female slaves, the Levites resident in your towns, as well as the strangers, the orphans and the widows who are among you — at the place that the Lord your God will choose as the dwelling place for his name. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and diligently observe these statutes.” (*Deuteronomy 16:9-12*)



The Hebrew word for ‘weeks’ was translated into Greek when, after the Babylonian exile, as well as the return to Jerusalem, many Jewish communities were established around the Mediterranean Basin among Greek-speaking communities. The counting of seven weeks became the counting of fifty days, hence the Greek name for the feast became “Pentecost”.

It was one of the three obligatory feasts of the Jewish calendar, along with Passover and Tabernacles, so on that feast in (perhaps) 33 AD, there were people in Jerusalem from the surrounding area as well as those from many other places, as described in Acts 2:9-11.

We do a disservice to our Jewish roots if we treat Pentecost as though the event described in Acts was the first Pentecost, just as much as we misunderstand the Holy Spirit if we think that this was his first appearance. Remember that we proclaim in the Creed that he “has spoken through the prophets” of the Old Testament.

Looking at the agricultural roots of the Old Testament may help us to understand better what we are celebrating today. It came fifty days (or five weeks) after the beginning of the barley harvest, and at the time of the beginning of the wheat-harvest. It was therefore a feast of thanksgiving for a gift received.

Jesus spoke of seeds growing and harvests: “The Kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.” (*Mark 4:26-29*)

The sowing and the harvesting is human activity, but the growing is in God’s hands, and so there is cause for thanksgiving to God. The Holy Spirit is God’s gift to us and therefore Pentecost must be a day of thanksgiving.

It is not just thanksgiving for the end of the harvest, as we are used to celebrating harvest festivals in England. It was also an offering of the first-fruits; the first stalk of wheat that was harvested.

St Paul described Jesus as the “first-fruits of those who have died” (*1 Corinthians 15:20*), and St James says “he gave us birth by the Word of Truth, so that we would become a kind of first-fruits of his creatures”. (*James 1:18*) The first-fruits are the offering of the best, not the left-overs, and also speak of the promise of that which is to come.

According to Rabbinic tradition, Pentecost was also the feast of the giving of the Torah; the Jewish Law. Jesus said he came to fulfil the Law (*Matthew 5:17*), and St Paul speaks of how this fulfilment works out in terms of the Law giving way to the Spirit (*See Romans 7:4-6*). So we now live “the new life of the Spirit”. Today is, therefore a day of rejoicing and thanksgiving.

Notices of Interest

Supporting CAFOD and the Hope Centre: Please see the respective websites to make donations for CAFOD and / or the Hope Centre:
<https://cafod.org.uk/>
<https://northamptonhopecentre.org.uk/get-involved/donate/>

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: The regular Thursday adoration is not taking place during this present emergency.

CAFOD Corona Virus online petition: Unite against the Corona Virus. We are living through the biggest Public Health Crisis in a century. Right across the UK it has been having a devastating impact on all our lives. Many people have lost loved ones. This is not a time for divisions. The world should unite in love and compassion. Out of love for our brothers and sisters please could you sign the online petition to our Prime Minister asking him to ensure the most vulnerable people are a priority in the UK's international efforts as well as at home. Visit <https://e-activist.com/page/59334/petition/1> to sign the petition online.

Bible Alive for June is now available. As well as the commentary on the daily readings for Mass, this edition carries an article on "Faith in a Pandemic" and an article on Nicky Gumbel who devised the 'Alpha' course. The cost is £3.00. If you want to purchase a copy, they are on a table outside the fire door to the foyer during the daytime, with a box of (out of date) green envelopes. You can put the payment in an envelope and post it through the presbytery door.

Hope Centre: The needs of the homeless are not changed during this emergency. Please see the separate notice about the Hope Centre.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: Please contact Deacon Michael direct (01604) 647750, E-mail: myf@btinternet.com for information.

First Holy Communion – 2020: The present course is suspended until the normal programme can be re-established.

Confirmation – 3rd Preparation Session: The present course is suspended until the normal programme can be re-established. There is a provisional date for Confirmation of 30th October.

Notice from the Diocese

Online Donation: The Diocese has an online donation facility on the main Diocesan website through Virgin Money Giving (link below). If you use this option we ask that you please indicate in the notes section **which parish, including the parish name and area (St Gregory's, Northampton)** that you would like your donation to be attributed to. Please note that there is the facility to Gift Aid any donation <https://northamptondiocese.org/donate/>

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)**

The Office: I shall be going back to 'normal' from this week! Unfortunately at this time I still can't speak to you face to face, but I will be available by phone or email at the usual times.
God bless and stay safe. *Caryll*

Bl. Cyprian Tansi Prayer Group will not meet during this time.

Vianney Mission Prayer Group will not meet during this time.

Becoming a Catholic: For adults interested in becoming a Catholic, the parish runs Journey in Faith process (RCIA). Also offered for adults who are Catholic, but have not received all the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation & Eucharist. Please speak to Alex Heath (07963032175) or Fr Andrew.

Forthcoming Alpha Course: The next Alpha Course was due to start on Tuesday April 21st. In view of the current projections for the Coronavirus pandemic, we have to postpone this course. However, those who have registered will be kept informed about any change of date. Much the easiest way to enrol is through the web-site at <http://stgregory.org.uk/alpha/>.

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

Online Prayer resources during this time

Live-streamed Mass from the Cathedral
<http://northamptoncathedral.org/live/>

Live-streamed Mass from Walsingham
<https://www.walsingham.org.uk/live-stream/>

Live-stream Mass from Lourdes
https://www.directfromlourdes.com/lourdes_live_tv

Fr Nicholas King leads Stations of the Cross
<https://vimeo.com/showcase/3785948>

Readings, homily and Spiritual Communion
<https://www.lentinisolation.com/videos>

EWTN
<https://www.ewtn.com/tv>

Sacred Space guided prayer
<https://www.sacredspace.ie/>

Cardinal Nichols leads Stations of the Cross
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16s7Nt_P2E

On participating in Mass on-line or through television

For most of us, it is a new experience to participate in Mass over the internet or on television. It is important not to be in the mindset of simply "watching television" or "watching a film". The Church as always asked for "active participation", and the medium of television make this quite difficult.

It is better if you can avoid sitting in an armchair or on a sofa, and try to adopt the same postures as you would in church (sitting, standing or kneeling), and to speak the responses; please do not simply be a viewer. On the back page of this newsletter is a simple prayer of Spiritual Communion.

We are all asked to pray the Rosary today for an end to the pandemic

Scripture Readings 31st May 2020, Pentecost Year A

Pentecost was less understood by Christians than the other two Jewish pilgrimage feasts of Passover and Tabernacles. Then the Dead Sea Scrolls showed that Pentecost was associated with God giving the Covenant on Sinai, and enrolling new community members. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles fits neatly with this Covenant feast.

The Psalm calls us to praise God's creative wisdom. Filled with wonder at the details of God's glorious works, this psalm is well worth reading in full.

Acts tells us that they "had all met", including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. Wind and fire remind us of Sinai. The list of peoples who hear is effectively the programme for the mission now starting.

After rebuking the Corinthians for their factions and giving us the

earliest description of the Eucharist, Paul shows how Christians together make up the one body of Christ on earth. It is the one Spirit who gives the gifts each of us needs for the particular task God has given us.

In the first ending of John's Gospel, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalen after his resurrection, and then to the disciples together in a closed room "for fear of the Jews". Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on them, sending them on mission with power to forgive sins.

Psalm Response: **Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth.**

(Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 103(104); 1 Corinthians 12:3-7,12-13; John 20:19-23)

Chris Oliver

The Season of Creation

Tip No. 67: *Living Sustainably with creation: Self realisation through Purposefulness, Health, Joy, Self-motivation, Contentment, Acceptance, Fulfilment and Creativity.*

Tip No. 68: *Living Sustainably with creation: regularly through the day, say a thanksgiving to God and remind ourselves to be compassionate.*

Actions to LiveSimply : Communication regularly (telephone) with of our , 'family in faith,' can cheer our predicament, or with eye contact using WhatsApp, Messenger or Skype.

Many thanks to Harry and Helen Charles who have offered to co-ordinate our parish's work towards the "Living Simply Award". Anyone who is interested is being involved in this, please contact them, or speak to Fr Andrew

Final accounts for 2019 - 2020

During the last week final accounts have been received from the Diocese, which show that we have an increased balance in the bank, although this is thanks to a one-off donation from the Legion of Mary. Without this we would have had a small deficit of £797.14. This would have been made up by two Sunday's collections in March which came after lockdown, so over all, we can see the past year as break-even.

The present financial year will clearly be a different story. The transfer of many people to standing orders has made a big difference, and the donations that people are making through envelopes put through the presbytery letter-box is a great help.

Many thanks to everyone who is supporting the parish financially through this time of lockdown.

Ecumenism at Pentecost

Pope John Paul II desired that the Church, on her journey towards the third millennium, should be ever mindful of the heartfelt prayer of her Teacher and Lord "that all may be one" (*John 17:21*). For this reason he issued the Encyclical that confirmed irrevocably the ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church. He published it on the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, placing it under the sign of the Holy Spirit, the creator of unity in diversity. In that same liturgical and spiritual context, we now commemorate it, and propose it once more to the People of God.

The Second Vatican Council recognized that the movement for the restoration of unity among all Christians arose by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Council also taught that the Spirit, while distributing various kinds of spiritual gifts and ministries, is the principle of the Church's unity". Ut Unum Sint reaffirmed that legitimate diversity is in no way opposed to the Church's unity, but rather enhances her splendour and contributes greatly to the fulfilment of her mission. Indeed, only the Holy Spirit is able to kindle diversity, multiplicity and, at the same time, bring about unity. It is he who brings harmony

to the Church, because, as Saint Basil the Great said, "He himself is harmony"

I give thanks to the Lord for the journey he has allowed us to travel as Christians in quest of full communion. I too share the healthy impatience of those who sometimes think that we can and should do more. Yet we should not be lacking in faith and gratitude: many steps have been taken in these decades to heal the wounds of centuries and millennia. Mutual knowledge and esteem have grown and helped to overcome deeply rooted prejudices. Theological dialogue and the dialogue of charity have developed, as well as various forms of cooperation in the dialogue of life, at both the pastoral and cultural level. At this moment, my thoughts turn to my beloved Brothers, the heads of the different Churches and Christian communities, and to all our brothers and sisters of every Christian tradition who are our companions on this journey. Like the disciples of Emmaus, may we experience the presence of the risen Christ who walks at our side and explains the Scriptures to us. May we recognize him in the breaking of the bread, as we await the day when we shall share the Eucharistic table together.

(Pope Francis, 24th May 2020)



**During this time of restricted public worship, please keep reading the Bible.
The Easter “Bible Alive” is available — see the note elsewhere in this
newsletter.**

