



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

All mankind shall see the salvation of God

This is part of the Alleluia verse for this Sunday's Mass, and is drawn from St Luke's account of the same event that Matthew is describing in today's Gospel. The gospel accounts are quoting from Isaiah 40:5, near the beginning of the second part of Isaiah, known as the 'Book of the Consolation'. It speaks of God's desire to bring all peoples to salvation.

We read this on the Sunday following the release of the news of the responses to the religious question in the 2021 national census, in which we are told that, for the first time, the number of those self-identifying as Christian has fallen to below 50%.

Last Sunday we heard a pastoral letter from our Bishop in which were chilling words:

“Every year, our number of priests decreases and we need to plan the best way to deploy our clergy. Mass attendance figures are also in steady decline. We need to look at our parishes, their properties and resources and discern where the future lies. This is a challenging exercise for many reasons. When a church is closed, a whole story of endeavour to build it, sacramental memory and community cohesion is lost or at least fractured. These decisions should not be taken lightly.”

We are all aware that the number of priests is in decline, and Mass attendance has not recovered from the pandemic. The Bishop has a responsibility to deploy his priests where they are most effective, and this may mean that some churches have to close. One of the determining factors must be the spiritual health of the worshipping community within the parish. A thriving parish community is more likely to survive than one which is not.

Bishop David spoke of Pope Francis' theme for the Synod next autumn: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission”. The idea of a synod is for a bishop together with the clergy and people of a diocese to talk about issues that face them. It is not of itself a decision-making body, and does not work like a parliament, nor is it a committee. There are some in the Church who seem to fear that it is a means of changing Church teaching. This fear is groundless; synods do not have that authority. The three headings are important.

Communion

The word 'Communion' can be understood in more than one way. First, we can see it as the gift to us of Holy Communion — of becoming one with God through receiving the body of Christ into our own bodies. But it is also at a human level the action of a community. It is a way of expressing fellowship one with another, and with a shared interest or purpose. We meet at Mass for Holy Communion, but our community life can be, and should be, greater than this. Our common purpose begins with our worship of God, but continues as we seek to make real our prayer that God's kingdom may come.

Participation

Communion cannot be the action of the few; it must involve everyone. That is, the participation of everyone. However, this participation can be expressed in many different ways, depending on the circumstances of each of us.

An example of this is our participation in Mass. Not everyone participates as the priest or the deacon; not everyone proclaims the Scriptures nor sings in a choir. Yet we all participate in making the responses, in participate in 'active listening'; above all, we participate in prayer and in Communion. We are not passive spectators nor just people who happen to be there.

So too in the life of the parish, if the parish is to be a 'thriving Catholic community'. The offer of refreshments after Mass on Sundays, and of a warm welcome on Monday and Wednesday mornings gives us the chance to get to know each other better and grow in fellowship and community. This is not a 'big ask' in itself, but may lead to other things.

Mission

Mission was Jesus' last command to his disciples: “Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations.” The long-term thriving of a parish depends on mission. A part of that mission is directed to the children of the parish, and demonstrated in their Sacramental preparation and in Children's Liturgy. Another part of that mission is directed to the adult congregation, and is demonstrated by the ongoing Bible study, by the Small Communities programme and other ongoing formation opportunities such as the afternoon retreat last Saturday and the day retreat next Saturday.

But the most important part of the mission must be directed to those who are outside the Church altogether; those who do not call themselves Christian; those 37.2% of the population who said they had 'no religion'.

All mankind shall see the salvation of God

None of us can take on the responsibility for a mission to all mankind. But all of us can be responsible for a mission to someone.

The first reading paints a picture of a world in which all peoples live in peace without warfare and violence: “the wold lives with the lamb, the panther lies down with the kid, calf and lion-cub feed together with a little boy to lead them. The cow and the bear make friends, their young lie down together”. (*Isaiah 11:6-7*) But this does not happen by chance. It depends on the previous paragraph; on the one on whom the Spirit of the Lord rests, that is, Christ. But he has given us the gift; we hear these words in Confirmation:

The Spirit of wisdom and insight, the spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

Supplied with these gifts, in communion with each other, in mutual participation, we are able to engage in mission.

Notices of Interest

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



We welcome into the family of the Church
Daisy Anna Shepherd
Bugsy James Loftus
And Helena Julie Joanna Bovell
who received Christian Baptism recently.
Please pray for them and their family.

Repository: The Repository is open after every Sunday Mass – Catholic Diaries for 2023 are now available, as are Christmas cards and mementos! 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*

Many thanks to the brave souls who climbed up ladders to shut the Church windows! Your help is very much appreciated.

Thursday Holy Hour & Adoration: As a trial, Holy Hour will be Holy Two Hours, from 9am until 11am. This can only continue if there are sufficient numbers to sustain it. No one is expected to remain for the entire two hours, come for as long as you can or want to.

Advent Retreat 2: Saturday 10th December, St Gregory's Church. Mass at 9am & ends at 4pm. Please bring packed lunch. "The New & Perpetual Pentecost, the coming era of peace. A new springtime for the Church". Derek Williams, catholic lay evangelist, will give a retreat on the gift of living in the Divine Will, a new dawn for the Church. All are welcome.

Food Parcels: Please contact Gregory Care (07434669011) if you or anyone you know would benefit from receiving a food parcel.

Save the Date: Saturday 18th March 2023 Encounter Northampton, a day hosted by Mission Northampton in St Gregory's Hall from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. More details later!

Church Heating: The Church heating has to be on for two hours before it even begins to warm up, so not running it for weekday Mass is a way of making a considerable saving. Please come in warm clothing! We will heat the church and hall on Sundays, but the extra cost of this will be more than the saving on weekdays.

December 17th, NYMO are hosting an extended Young Adults Brunch, with Adoration, Faith Formation, Food, Fellowship, Mass, & 2 amazing guest speakers, Joanna Bogle, & from the US, Meg Hunter-Kilmer. (Bring a Bible with you!) We invite you to join us for this free event, 10am with Adoration, at Our Lady Help of Christians, Luton. For full details, please see nymo.org/brunch. Age 18-35

The God who Speaks: The 'Year of the Word' continues and the Diocesan Bible Study sessions for the Sunday Mass readings are continuing. In January there will be an introduction to the Year of Matthew (Year A in the lectionary)

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be on Monday 16th Jan 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: Important Dates for First Communion Families: Congratulations to all children who have enrolled on the First Holy Communion programme. You will now have all the dates of sessions. Please try to attend them all, and please enjoy the course!

Confirmation in 2023: Those interested in Confirmation preparation are asked to meet Helen after the 9.00 Mass this Sunday.

Flowers for Christmas: The usual envelopes for donations for Christmas flowers will be available from this week

Christmas Cards: With the very high cost of postage, you are welcome to leave Christmas Cards for people who attend St Gregory's Church on the table at the back of church. However, **PLEASE** do not just write the Christian name on the envelope!

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

In honour of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary there will be 24 hours Exposition at the Diocesan Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. Adoration will start after 10.30 Mass on Wed. 7th Dec. and will conclude with 9.30am Mass Thurs. If you can commit to an hour please phone Gillian 07724337202 or just come along. Thank you.

Missio Donors/ Red Box holders: Calendars for 2023 are free to supporters & are available now: visit table beside the confessionals. New supporters of Missio to help spread the missionary work of the Church are always welcome and needed. For further information speak to the clergy or Dorothy (9:00 Mass) or Alec (11:00 Mass).

Choir Matters: I have cancelled Christmas...practices, as we are now as fully prepared as we can be in the circumstances. *Alec*

A course on the Psalms: It is sub-titled "The School of Prayer", with the invitation to 'learn to pray like Christ'. Continues.

Memorial Mass: On Sat. 17th December, 11am, there will be a Celebratory Mass for Philip Ndekwe RIP. All welcome.

Tots @ St Gregory's: We have re-started: tots and their carers welcome, 9.30-11.30 on Tuesdays during term-time £1 per adult!!

St Gregory's Brownies: St Gregory's has a Brownie Unit who meet in the hall on Wednesday evenings. We have some spaces due to some of our girls going up to Guides and would love to meet some new prospective Brownies. We are all aged between 7 and 10 years. Please get in touch with the leaders on tw.lewis@ntlworld.com for more information or a little chat.

Flame 2023: The theme of Flame 2023 – which is exactly 150 days before World Youth Day in Lisbon – takes the WYD Scripture "Mary arose & went with haste" and crystallises it into the theme, "Rise Up!" Rise up after the pandemic, Rise up as young Catholics, Rise up – as Mary did – for the surprising and beautiful adventure that is our Catholic faith. **Sat 4th March 23 - book the date - more details soon**

Parish Finances: 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)**

Refreshment Donations: Thank you for your generous donations to the Bible Society which amounted to £127.04. All donations given now from after Sunday Mass will be given to the Hope Centre, and added to offerings made at the crib.

Prayers 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 8th December 2022, 2nd Sunday of Advent, Year A

The readings for Advent from Isaiah continue with this description of the ideal king, who will come from the remnant of Israel – the stump of Jesse, of David’s dynasty. This was applied by Christians to Jesus. But Isaiah was seeking to comfort his people, under attack by Assyria, as he foresees an idyllic future when the whole of creation will live in complete harmony. Only the “fear of the Lord” and the “knowledge of the Lord” could bring this about.

The psalm looks forward to the coming of a perfect king, the Messiah, whose rule will be just and his reign glorious.

Paul’s letter to the Romans exhorts the two groups of Christians in Rome to work patiently together, ignoring varying degrees of conformity to the Jewish Law. We must learn about God from the Jewish Scriptures, the Old Testament, so that we may worship him in unity of mind and mouth. The Messiah’s sufferings show

that God keeps His promises, and will lead all nations, both Jews and Gentiles, to praise God.

In the Gospel John the Baptist, the last prophet of the Old Testament, prepares the way of the Lord by urging people to repent, to turn towards God from their sins. But he condemns those who say they have no need of God.

Psalm Response: **In his days justice shall flourish and peace till the moon fails.**

(Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 71(72); Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12)

Chris Oliver

Last Alpha of this season

This Alpha has been marked by the sudden and sad death of Richard Heron who, apart from being one of the Table Leaders, was someone who brought humour and jollity to every session he was at. As a sign of the communion and participation of the Alpha Team, it was they who provided and served the refreshments to the vast number of people who came to Richard’s funeral last Thursday.

Alpha will run again next year. Many people prefer not to go out in dark evenings, and consideration will be given to this in determining the dates for future courses.

Alpha has proved itself to be a powerful means of engaging in Mission, and it utilises many different skills. With a large enough team, no one need attend every session, although a degree of continuity is desirable as part of the way it works is that good relationships are built up between the attendees, whether guest or team members.

Anyone interested in finding out more about this, please speak to Daniel Davighi, Rayner Wilnecker or Fr Andrew.

First session:	September 20th 2022:	Is there more to life than this?
Second Session:	September 27th 2022:	Who is Jesus?
Third Session:	October 4th 2022:	Why did Jesus die?
Fourth Session:	October 11th 2022:	How can I have faith?
Fifth Session:	October 18th 2022:	Why and how do I pray?
Sixth Session:	October 25th 2022:	Why and how should I read the Bible?
Seventh Session:	November 8th 2022:	How does God guide us?
Away-Day:	November 11th - 12th:	Who is the Holy Spirit? What does the Holy Spirit do? How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? How can I make the most if the rest of my life?
Eighth Session:	November 15th 2022:	How can I resist evil?
Ninth Session:	November 22nd 2022:	Why and how should I tell others?
Tenth Session:	November 29th 2022:	Does God heal today?
Eleventh Session:	December 6th 2022:	What about the Church?

‘Twas the night before Christmas

The Mass for children on Christmas Eve has long been one of the most popular parts of St Gregory’s celebration, and children are being rehearsed for their parts in that Mass. Some say that Christmas is for children, but the truth is that we are all children at heart, and the joy of Christmas is for everyone. We have a good number of children in the First Holy Communion preparation group, and a good number attend Children’s Liturgy each week. Many thanks to all who are helping in this. Please note that anyone interested in Confirmation should see Helen after the 9.00 Mass today.

Christmas Gifts for the person who doesn’t need more!

CAFOD World Gifts

World Gifts are a range of virtual charity gifts that will delight the people you give them to and help transform the lives of families living in poverty. Ranging in price from under £10 to £4,000, you can buy a queen bee for £4, or a vegetable garden for £5; for £10 you can teach someone to read. <https://worldgifts.cafod.org.uk/>

Cathedral Foodstore

Christmas Gift cards are available, priced at either £5 or £10, suitable gifts for those for whom you cannot think what to buy. The

money helps to buy food for the Cathedral Foodstore, the card is your gift.

Cards can be bought after Sunday Mass or from the parish office on Mondays, Wednesdays or Fridays

Gregory Care Toiletries

Your gifts of toiletries to Gregory Care are an important part of the support given by the Cathedral Foodstore to needy families. Thank you for your continued generosity

Hope Centre Food

Continued thanks for your regular generosity to the Hope Centre. From this Sunday and

until the end of Christmastide your donations for refreshments in the hall are given to the Hope Centre, along with the offerings at the crib

Caritas ‘Love Christmas’

Caritas Northampton are collecting toys, books, games, puzzles, chocolates to luxury biscuits, slippers, socks, gloves and scarves, perfumes and aftershaves, makeup and jewellery, colouring books and baby gifts which are distributed throughout the diocese as Christmas gifts to needy families. <https://northamptondiocese.org/lovechristmas/>