



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

Passion for evangelisation

Last week the front of the Newsletter began what will be the following of the series of addresses that Pope Francis is giving at his Wednesday audiences. He sees the series as on the ‘Passion of Evangelisation, that is, on the apostolic zeal that should enliven the Church and every Christian.’

Last week he was keen to emphasise that we evangelise by attraction, not by argument. For that to be so, we must be alive with the Holy Spirit and abounding in goodness. In the address for the 18th January he continues the theme, now inviting us to explore more deeply how we can reveal this to others.

The centre of this is relationship. Pope Francis begins by speaking of the central relationship; that which exists within the Trinity. Any word exists in relation to the speaker/writer, and if it is to go anywhere, with a hearer/reader. So the Word of God, the Word made flesh exists in permanent relationship with the Father, and with us. “He lives always turned toward the Father and toward us. Always looking at his Father who sent him and looking at us to whom he was sent.” It is this relationship that inspires the prayer-life of Jesus which we meet so often in the Gospels.

The other side of the relationship — that of the Word with the hearer is also clearly seen in the Gospels. It is seen in every human encounter he has. Even when rejected by people, he remained loving them. (*See, for example Mark 10:17-22*). Pope Francis suggests that this relationship is well summed-up in the image of the Good Shepherd.

The early Church clearly had a great devotion to Jesus as the Good Shepherd; three of the earliest depictions of Jesus show him with a sheep on his shoulder and a couple of sheep at his feet. These are to be found in the catacombs and date from the days of persecution in the Roman Empire, and long before any representation of the crucifixion.

“This is Jesus. In reality, being a shepherd was not just a job that required time and a lot of dedication; it was a true and proper way of life: 24 hours a day, living with the flock, accompanying it to pasture, sleeping among the sheep, taking care of those who were weakest. In other words, Jesus does not do something for us, but he gives everything. He gives his life for us. He has a *pastoral heart* (cf. *Ezekiel 34:15*). He is a shepherd for all of us.”

The mission of the Church is sometimes described as ‘Pastoral’; deriving from the Latin word ‘pastor’ meaning ‘shepherd’.

“Jesus himself clearly said it to his disciples: “Apart from me you can do nothing” (*John 15:5*). If we stay with Jesus, we discover that his pastoral heart always beats for the person who is confused, lost, far away.

Last week Pope Francis invited us to consider the call of Matthew. Now he points us to the three parables of Luke chapter 15; the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son.

“If we want to train our apostolic zeal, we should always have chapter 15 of Luke before our eyes. Read it often. There we can understand what apostolic zeal is. There we discover that God does not remain contemplating the sheep pen, nor does he threaten them so they won’t leave. Rather, if one leaves and gets lost, he does not abandon it but goes in search of it. He does not say, “It left. That’s its fault. That’s its business!” His pastoral heart reacts in another way: the pastoral heart *suffers* and the pastoral heart *takes risks*. It *suffers*: yes, God suffers for those who leave and, while he mourns over them, he loves them even more. The Lord suffers when we distance ourselves from his heart. He suffers for all who do not know the beauty of his love and the warmth of his embrace. But, in response to this suffering, he does not withdraw; rather, he *takes a risk*. He leaves the 99 sheep who are safe and ventures out for the lost one, thus doing something both risky and unreasonable, but consonant with his pastoral heart which misses the one who left. The longing for those who have left is constant in Jesus. And when we hear that someone has left the Church, what do we want to say? “Let them work it out”. No. Jesus teaches us nostalgia for those who have left. Jesus does not feel anger or resentment but pure longing for us. Jesus feels nostalgic for us and this is God’s zeal.”

Pope Francis invites us to share in this single-hearted sense of love for all God’s people as the well-spring of the Church’s mission; both pastoral and evangelical: “When we meet them* at school, at work, on the streets of the city, why don’t we think . . . that we have a beautiful opportunity to witness to them the joy of a Father who loves them and has never forgotten them?”

*Those who do not have faith or no longer practice their faith

Alpha gives us just such an opportunity; an opportunity to reach out with the love of God.

“It is about loving so that they might be happy children of God. In prayer, let us ask for the grace of a pastoral heart, an open heart that draws near to everyone, so as to bear the Lord’s message as well as to feel Christ’s longing for each of them. For without this love that suffers and takes risks, our life does not work. If we Christians do not have this love that suffers and takes risks, we risk pasturing only ourselves. Shepherds who are shepherds of themselves, instead of being shepherds of the flock, are people who comb “exquisite” sheep. We do not need to be shepherds of ourselves, but shepherds for everyone.”

All quotations, unless otherwise credited are from Pope Francis’ general audience teaching on January 18th 2023
<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2023/documents/20230118-udienza-generale.html>

Notices of Interest



We welcome into the family of the Church
Emily Vantur and
John Christopher McDonagh
who received Christian Baptism recently.
Please pray for them and their families.

Bible Alive for February 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.

Repository: The Repository is open after every Sunday Mass wherever possible! We also 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. PS: There are still some Church Art Calendars and Diaries available.

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.

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**

Retrouvaille: A Programme for Couples Struggling in their Marriages: Help Your Marriage. Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille is a programme to support couples who have difficulties in their marriage. Tens of thousands of couples headed for divorce have successfully saved their marriages by attending & using the tools provided. There is no group therapy or group work. For confidential info or to register for the next programme commencing with a Face to Face weekend in Welwyn Garden City on 24 - 26 February 2023, or a Virtual weekend on 6 - 9 July 2023, call/text 07887296983 or 07973380443 or email retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com - or visit www.retrouvaille.org.uk

Hope Centre: The Hope Centre's cupboards are quite bare at the moment and they would so much appreciate it if people could kindly donate a little extra, or just as much as they can, to fill the shelves again! Many thanks.

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

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.

Join Friends of the Holy Land for an unforgettable evening of uplifting music on Thursday 16th February in Westminster Cathedral at a concert featuring the London Welsh Male Voice Choir supported by The Priests. The London Welsh Male Voice Choir has recorded with Charlotte Church, Aled Jones and Bryn Terfel. The Priests are three Roman Catholic priests from Northern Ireland who scooped the **Guinness World Record** for "Fastest-selling UK debut for a classical act" with their first album. The concert starts at 7:30 pm and tickets starting at £20 are available now through Eventbrite at - <http://bit.ly/3i0ath2> or search **LWMVC Concert at Westminster Cathedral**, or by calling the office – 01926 512980. www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/westminster-concert2023

Refreshment Donations: Until the beginning of Lent, refreshment donations are given to Gregory Care which supports those in material need in our own parish, but also operates the toiletry collections for the Cathedral Foodstore. The total of donations to the Hope Centre has been magnificent, and will provide significant help for the homeless of our town.

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. There have been instances of serious fires beginning in this way. Unlit candles **MUST NOT** be placed on these trays in any circumstances. This has been happening in recent weeks, but it does represent a major fire risk, and must not continue. Please will everyone be observant about this.

Change of Date: Now Saturday 25th 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!

Car Park: Once again, may I remind car park users to be more considerate of others & **NOT** block the entrance/exit at any time. To do so makes things very difficult for other users and could be dangerous. If there are no places available, please use nearby roadside spaces.
Thank you. *Caryll*.

Food Parcels: Please contact Gregory Care (01604 713015) if you or anyone you know would benefit from receiving a food parcel.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be on Monday 13th Feb 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: 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 should have spoken to Helen and will know the plan for the coming months.

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)**

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

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 5th February 2023, 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

After the exiles returned to rebuild Jerusalem there were many difficulties and they lost heart. Third Isaiah writing after 500BC told them this was because of a lack of social justice: ritual and fasting have value only if they are expressions of a just society. Today's reading and the verse before it give the essentials of true religion: deal justly with your neighbour, free the oppressed, feed the hungry. Then your good deeds will influence others and give glory to God, without drawing attention to yourselves.

The psalm praises the virtues of the God-fearing man, who lights the way for others lost in confusion.

Paul says that when he came to the Corinthians, he did not draw attention to himself by relying on the powers of clever oratory to convince people about the 'mystery' of God – the salvific events to be revealed in the age to come. No, he believes "Jesus Christ

and him crucified", the message itself, making visible the power of God, is strong enough to convince.

In Matthew's gospel Jesus began his ministry in Galilee, previously part of the northern kingdom Israel. On a mountain he teaches the beatitudes, before insisting Christians must show the way for all mankind to find the way to God, influencing without seeking to be noticed.

Psalm Response: **The good man is a light in the darkness for the upright.**

(Isaiah 58:7-10; Psalm 111(112); 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Matthew 5:13-16)

Chris Oliver

— On being attractive! —

There is a vast industry in perceived physical attractiveness; to have an attractive shape; to wear attractive clothes; to smell attractive; to have attractive skin, and many other products on which we can spend our money and may give the perception of attractiveness. Visual and nasal devices for becoming attractive are the works of artifice and are ultimately artificial.

Last week we read Pope Francis teaching us that we evangelise through attraction, but this cannot be an artificial attractiveness; it must be deeper than on the outside of the skin like clothes or perfume. It must come from within: it is being 'alive with the Holy Spirit'. The visible sign of this is seen in good works, such as support for the charitable works of the Church.

A Concert supporting our Warm Welcome

A really big thank-you to the 'Sheppard Singers' who gave us such a wonderful evening last Saturday to support our 'Warm Welcome' initiative. From the very first note of 'Deus in adiutorium meum intende' (ideal words to start a concert in church; they are the first words of the

Divine Office: 'O God, come to our aid' through to the very end we were moved and delighted with the beautiful music, both old and new. How very fortunate we are to have such high-quality music in our own town. We look forward to a further visit in warmer times!

GREGORY CARE

Thank you all for your generous support over the past few months. Your support has been amazing and has enabled us to provide gifts to several families over Christmas as well as providing clothes, toys and household items to families in need. We have recently committed to working with local churches to support Ukrainian families staying at the Westone Hotel. As we have no storage facilities we cannot accept general donations but please lookout for specific items we may be asking for.

Gregory Care is a very small dedicated team of volunteers who would welcome more volunteers with new skills, ideas and time. If you would like to hear more about us please speak to Carole or Catherine.

TOILETRIES

Two years on and your support providing toiletries for the Cathedral Foodstore continues to grow in line with demand. Your generosity is not only appreciated by the recipients but has also been noted by Foodstore volunteers, local councillors and other supporters of the Foodstore. St Gregory's was ahead of the game in recognising the negative impact of hygiene poverty. Your weekly contributions are helping to improve the mental and physical health of local people in need. As a parish we should be proud of what we are continuing to achieve. We hope some of you may have seen the write up in the Chronicle and Echo - 'The reality of a typical Thursday morning Foodbank session' (9th January)

<https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/news/people/the-reality-of-a-typical-thursday-morning-foodbank-session-in-northampton-in-january-a-volunteers-view-3979701>

Alpha beginning on March 14th 2023

Last week you may well have been given an invitation to share in the next Alpha, together with a 'plus one'. With five weeks to go to the start, it may seem that there is no great hurry. There is a significant verse in the psalms: "O that **today** you would listen to his voice". (*Psalm 95:7*)

There will be more invitations available today. Please do not miss this opportunity to be on the front-line of the work that God has entrusted to us, and in which Pope Francis is encouraging us.

First session:	March 14th 2023:	Is there more to life than this?
Second Session:	March 21st 2023:	Who is Jesus?
Third Session:	March 28th 2023	Why did Jesus die?
Fourth Session:	April 18th 2023:	How can I have faith?
Fifth Session:	April 25th 2023:	Why and how do I pray?
Sixth Session:	May 2nd 2023:	Why and how should I read the Bible?
Seventh Session:	May 9th 2023:	How does God guide us?
Away-Day:	May 12th/13th 2023	Who is the Holy Spirit?
Eighth Session:	May 16th 2023:	How can I resist evil?
Ninth Session:	May 23rd 2023:	Why and how should I tell others?
Tenth Session:	June 6th 2023:	Does God heal today?
Eleventh Session:	June 13th 2023:	What about the Church?

