



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.”**

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VISION

Food for the Journey

This is the third of five weeks in which we read from the sixth chapter of St John’s Gospel, the discourse on the Bread of Life. Our Gospel passage today is linked to the story of Elijah fleeing from the wrath of Jezebel.

He has nearly given up all hope, when an angel tells him to eat, and he finds what is translated as a ‘scone’. Other translations say it was a cake, but the Hebrew word used here is the same as that used in Exodus to describe the bread that the Israelite people made as their food for their escape from Egypt. (See *Exodus 12:39*) This is the reason why we use the same type of bread for Mass.

We have already seen in the last two weeks that the whole of this passage in John’s Gospel must be read in the light of the Passover — Jesus walking on the water across the Sea of Galilee reminding us of the crossing of the Red Sea and the Manna reminding us of the Bread of Angels which fed the Israelites on their journey to the promised land.

Here again we read of bread provided by an angel, and again it is food for a journey; this in the opposite direction to that made by Moses; Elijah is travelling to Mount Horeb; otherwise known as Mount Sinai.

[In Exodus the place where the Ten Commandments are given is called Mount Sinai (*Exodus 19:11*), in Deuteronomy it is called Mount Horeb (*Deuteronomy 5:2*). It is clearly the same place, just as the mountain called ‘Snowdon’ by English-speakers is called ‘Yr Wyddfa’ by Welsh-speakers.]

Moses had already visited Horeb (Sinai) — he had been looking after his father-in-law’s flock of sheep, and crossed the wilderness and ‘came to Horeb, the mountain of God’ (*Exodus 3:1*). This was the time when God reveals his name as “I am who I am”. (*Exodus 3:14*) Later on Moses was to have another encounter with God on this same mountain, when he saw the glory of God pass by whilst hidden in the cleft of a rock (*Exodus 33:21-23*).

At the end of his journey to Horeb Elijah has a similar experience while in a cave, when he hears God as a ‘still small voice of calm’. (*1 Kings 19:11-13*) Horeb has good cause to be called ‘the Mountain of God’. The bread the angel had given him was to sustain him on his journey towards this meeting with God. However, that meeting was not his mortal death; that would come later. The bread was to sustain him in his journey through life.

Jesus speaks of movement; a journey in a sense. He speaks of coming to him. But before we get to the Gospel, we find in the second

reading: “Try, then, to imitate God, as children of his that he loves, and *follow Christ* by loving as he loved you.” (*Ephesians 5:2*)

We are invited to go on a journey to the mountain of the Lord; not a geographical place, but rather a spiritual place, but most of all, a meeting-place with God. This is indicated in the traditional layout of churches, in which the Altar is set at the top of a number of steps, usually three, but sometimes more.

The Blessed Sacrament is our ‘food for the journey’. This term is used in a particular sense in the word ‘viaticum’, which is the last reception of the Eucharist before mortal death, and is understood as food for the journey to everlasting life. The prayer after Communion at a funeral Mass speaks of this: “Lord God, whose Son left us, in the Sacrament of his Body, food for the journey, mercifully grant that, strengthened by it, our brother/sister may come to the eternal table of Christ.”

We should not think only of that last journey, but that our whole life is a journey towards God, a journey in following Christ who is ‘the Way’. But not only the way, but also the food for the wayfarer.

This food is no ordinary bread, and the last sentence of the Gospel makes this very clear. “The bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.” So, at every Mass we pray that the Holy Spirit will come upon the bread and wine that they may become the Body and Blood of Christ. The Church has a technical term for this: ‘Transubstantiation’

“The mode of Christ’s presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as “the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend.” In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist “the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.*” “This presence is called ‘real’ - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be ‘real’ too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a *substantial* presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church 1374

We cannot understand *how* God makes this change, any more than we can understand *how* God took flesh in the womb of Our Lady. Indeed, there are many things about God that we cannot understand. Bishop Barron reminds us in the ‘Catholicism’ course of the words of St Augustine: “Si comprehendis, non est Deus”: if you can understand it, it isn’t God.

Notices of Interest

Bible Alive for August 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: There is a display of cards in the Foyer. If you wish to buy anything, please come to the Foyer after Sunday Mass, or the Office on Mon, Wed or Friday mornings & speak to the Secretary who will show you what to do & where to go.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next preparation will be in the Sacristy on Monday 6th September, 7pm. Please note that you will need to phone Deacon Michael on 07999808997 before you attend, to book your place.

First Holy Communion 2022: We are already planning our preparation for First Holy Communions next year! So if you have a child who will be in year group 3, 4, 5 or 6 this September and who would like to be involved in next year's programme watch this space! There will be more details in September!

Confirmation: At last we have a date: 1st October; feast of St Thérèse of Lisieux! The Confirmation will be at St Gregory's.

Catechists & Youth Leaders - Blaze: NYMO would like to bring together the Confirmation Catechists and Youth Leaders on 4th September at Holy Ghost Church, Luton, 11am – 1pm, to spend some time with them as they prayerfully discern the best way to evangelise and form our young people through Blaze. There are invitation cards on the table at the back of the church.

SPUC: Help protect the lives of Unborn Children & send a message that abortion is harmful to unborn children & their mothers by joining this year's March for Life. The march is on Saturday 4th September & will take place in Central London. It is a great Pro Life event & it is encouraging to be with so many Pro Life supporters. For further details either go onto the March for Life website marchforlife.co.uk or contact William on 07393965643 or wpcurrie@btinternet.com. It is not enough just to say that we are Pro Life: we must take action to stop abortion & the terrible damage it is doing to vulnerable girls, women & their unborn children.

Mission Northampton: Mission Northampton will be based at the new St Thomas Centre at Northampton Cathedral, but be a town-wide project involving all the parishes & Catholic schools in the town. It is being led by Fr David Donaghue, & there will be a variety of initiatives to seek to proclaim the Gospel, & make us all better missionary disciples. Please keep praying for it, & for our own parish, that we may become all that God wishes us to be, & that, like the first Christians, we may be devoted to the teaching of the apostles, to the fellowship, to the Breaking of Bread & to the prayers. May we all be truly missionary disciples, & this a missionary parish. If you are interested in being part of this exciting new initiative he would like to hear from you. There will be a prayer evening & presentation shortly. Please contact Fr David for further information: frdaviddonaghue@northamptondiocese.org

News from the Foodstore! We as a parish are continuing to support the Cathedral Foodstore by supplying toiletries to add to food bags. The Cathedral supply these provisions each week to families in need from around Northampton. Please help us to continue our commitment to provide household & personal hygiene products. We aim to add 2 items to each bag & there are approximately 80 bag sent out each week, which serves around 250 people. At the moment we have very little in reserve. (Except for baby products.) Please donate what you can, & continue to pray for this work. Many Thanks, Gregory Care.

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

Tots @ St Gregory's: We are planning to restart on Tuesday September 7th, 9.30 - 11.30. Refreshments provided. 50p per family. All welcome!

Vianney Mission Prayer Group will not meet during this time.

Parish Finances: Continued thanks for the wonderful generosity that you are showing, to the parish, in the special collections, to CAFOD, Missio, and in gifts for the kitchen refurbishment.

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)**

10th Anniversary of the Syrian conflict: how your donations have helped the Syrian people.

Thanks to your donations, CAFOD has been helping people in Syria since the crisis began 10 years ago. Over 12 million people have left their homes, 5.6 million are refugees in neighbouring countries & within Syria, 13 million people need help. At the beginning, our focus was on delivering food & blankets through our local church partners. Then we started providing education, health & legal services, & helping people earn a living. Our latest projects are supporting children, lonely elderly people, helping women learn to read, & helping people restart small businesses. We've always planned for the long term, standing alongside people who lost everything. None of this work would have been possible without your support of CAFOD.

Choir Matters: I hope you have been pleased to hear the small group of choir members recently & that you were all able to join in the Mass settings over the last two weeks. Thanks to Deacon Michael, I expect to have Power Point slides on show. These will include words of those hymns we will be using so let's hear you praise the Lord in song! You will still need to be masked & we are encouraged to sing but sing with restraint to lessen the risk of transmission of the virus. Because of time constraints, the entry hymn at 11:00 Mass will not include every verse nor will we have a hymn at the end. Offertory & Communion hymns will be as full as time allows. Our 1st monthly choir practice was last Thurs.; the next is due 2 Sep - Feast of St Gregory, Friday 3rd. *Alec*

The Catholicism Course: The "Catholicism" course is running on Tuesday evenings through the summer, starting at 7.30. While it does form a continuous course, each session does stand alone, so if you have to miss one or more, you can dip in to those you can. It will run on Zoom to start with, and depending on changes to regulations and if the participants would prefer, could change to 'face to face' later. There are ten sessions:

- 1 July 6th The revelation of God become Man
- 2 July 20th The Teaching of Jesus
- 3 July 27th God, than whom nothing greater can be thought
- 4 August 3rd **Mary, Mother of God**
- 5 August 10th Peter and Paul; the first Missions
- 6 August 17th Christ and the Church
- 7 August 24th The Eucharist
- 8 August 31st The Communion of Saints
- 9 September 7th Prayer and the Life of the Spirit
- 10 September 14th The Last Things

please email to Fr Andrew for the Zoom link

Climate Change and COP26 As well as the problems caused by the pandemic, we are also seeing an increasing number of extreme climate events, and the vast majority of scientists see this as a result of climate change due, at least, in part to human activity. As Christians, we need to be involved in protecting God's creation on earth.

Scripture Readings 8th August 2021, 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

Elijah had defeated the gods of Baal by pouring water over the firewood, and then asking God to accept his sacrifice, thus bringing rain to end the drought he had predicted. The king's wife, Jezebel, had brought worship of Baal to Israel, so she was very angry, and sought to kill Elijah, who fled in despair. But today we hear how God encourages Elijah to continue his journey to Mount Sinai, and, as during the Exodus, God provides food and water for the journey.

The Psalm invites us to praise the Lord, who will help us in time of need.

Our readings from the letter to the Ephesians continue with rules for the new life, teasing out the real meaning of the Ten Commandments. But in loving others we must be prepared to suffer persecution and even death, as Christ did.

Jesus' teaching on the Eucharist in Chapter 6 of John's Gospel continues. Last week we heard Jesus say "I am the bread of life". This week Jesus takes it further: just as God fed Elijah, and had fed the Israelites with manna and quails during the Exodus, Jesus feeds us with the "living bread". Even more: the bread that Jesus gives is his own flesh. Next week we hear reactions to this astounding claim.

Psalm Response: **Taste and see that the Lord is good.**

(1 Kings 19: 4-8; Psalm 33(34): 2-9; Eph 4:30-5:2; John 6: 41-51)

Chris Oliver

Refreshments after 9.00 am Sunday and Wednesday Mass

Come and see! Today, after the 9.00 Mass there will be refreshments available. We are still following precautions against COVID, and please do not go against the social distancing guidelines, but if you wish, you are welcome to have a drink and

refreshment in the hall after the 9.00 am Mass, prepared in the newly-completed kitchen.

Refreshments will also be offered on Wednesday mornings after Mass for any who wish.

Looking Forward

While many may be looking forward to a holiday of some sort in August, we are only four weeks away from our annual celebrations of the Feast of St Gregory and the Anniversary of the Consecration of the church 17 years ago. This always comes at the start of the autumn programme of events, and after the previous 18 months, has a very odd feeling about it.

While we hope and pray that the worst of the pandemic is past, at least in this country, the fact that the infection rates in Northampton were rising until this last week was a serious cause for concern. Might we be back into lockdown later in the year? A far more serious issue is the unfair and unjust distribution of vaccine across the world, with the international travel bans. The media are more concerned about holiday destinations, but with our international congregation, many have families in countries which have high infection rates and little opportunity for vaccination. It has been well said that "no one is safe until everyone is safe". The wealthy countries have become very nationalistic in their approach to infection.

It is therefore with a degree of uncertainty that we are planning the autumn programme. It will begin with the celebration of the Feast of our patron, St Gregory the Great on Friday evening, September 3rd. There will be Mass at 7.00 pm, followed by refreshments in the hall. The Choir and musicians are preparing for the Mass, and we will be inviting offerings of food for the refreshments nearer the time. However, there are still many who do not yet feel able to return to Mass, especially if the church is crowded. We are still keeping our distance from each other in church, and we cannot yet know whether the next four weeks will make a change in this.

The following Sunday is celebrated as the anniversary of the Consecration of the Church, and is in a sense, a birthday for the parish. This year, above all, it is the beginning of a new era. We were living in the era BC (Before Covid). We are entering the new era of AD, which might be called 'Apostolic Discipleship'.

This contrived phrase reflects the idea behind the new Diocesan Framework which was in the newsletter last week. The word 'apostle' literally means 'one who is sent', from the Greek 'ἀπόστολος' (apostolos). Disciple means 'one who learns', from the Latin 'discere' (to learn). Apostolic discipleship means learning while doing — an apprenticeship, in which the most important lessons are not learned in a classroom but on the shop floor.

The bishop's vision is for the diocese to be oriented towards mission, and the framework relates to the structures of the diocese. However, the same vision is needed in the parishes — our own vision for the parish (A truly thriving Catholic community confidently and humbly proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ) is completely in line with this.

An important part of our apostolic work is in the Alpha programme. The next course will start on September 21st. Much the best way to invite someone is to accompany them ("Let us go together", *Psalm 121 or 122 verse 1, depending on which Bible you use*). By doing this you are being both apostle and disciple.

Alpha needs a number of teams; a team to prepare the hall, a catering team to cook the meal, a welcoming team to ensure that everyone is looked after, a technical team to control the video, a facilitator team to lead the discussion and a washing-up team, whose task is in the name! After a few weeks there is singing as well, once initial inhibitions have worn off, and a music leader is a welcome participant. In this there are opportunities for everyone, and now is a good time to start considering how you could be involved. By having teams, it is possible not to be committed for every week. This course will run on most Tuesday evenings from 21st September until 14th December, and also an 'awayday' on November 19th - 20th. There is no charge for this, although we can be persuaded to receive donations. The meal each evening is substantial (forget Scotch Eggs; we are talking about a real evening meal!).

SECOND COLLECTIONS 2021



28th February	CAFOD (Lenten Fast Day 26th Feb)
2nd April	Good Friday Collection for the Holy Places
25th April	Diocesan Priests' Training Fund
16th May	Mass Media
20th June	Day for Life
27th June	Peter's Pence
11th July	Apostleship of the Sea
19th September	Home Mission Sunday
3rd October	CAFOD (Harvest Fast Day 1st October)
24th October	Mission Sunday
7th November	Bishop's Maintenance Fund
14th November	Sick & Retired Priests' Fund