

Fifth Sunday of Easter, 28 April 2024

“It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples.”

The world is full of gardeners and, just as with flowers and fruit, gardeners come in all shapes and sizes. We have the professionals who dedicate their lives to producing the best of blooms, new and old, and we have the city dwellers with nothing but window boxes and indoor plants who still manage to create havens of beauty and interest. Then there are those who grow plants commercially to feed the world's population.

Over the last hundred years we have seen the development of all sorts of chemical and mechanical aids to enhance productivity. This was followed by the rather terrifying discovery that many of these aids were having a destructive effect on the environment and the birds and bees that were nature's system of support for growth. Some of the food being produced, at its best, could be lacking in nutrients. At its worst, it could prove toxic. The movement now, sometimes called the slow movement, is looking to find ways of working with nature rather than against it. Nature is to be regarded as our bosom friend rather than as an enemy that must be subdued. This approach will take time and we don't know whether we have that luxury. Our earlier ideas of progress are resulting in rapid climate changes and the consequent transformation of the planet into a desert, which of course will not bear fruit. How shall we enable our earth to bear fruit that will last?

Jesus is very fond of the image of the vine. He also uses other pastoral images: the flowers of the field, ears of corn and seed that is sown, but he likens the kingdom of heaven to a vineyard on more than one occasion and stresses our responsibility for helping the vines to flourish. In today's reading he goes even further and speaks of himself as the vine of which we are the branches. He then uses images from the practices of cultivating a vine to deepen our understanding of how we may become his disciples. The images he uses apply equally to vine cultivation today as in the time of Jesus. You can't leave a vine to its own devices. It will just sprawl all over the place and produce leaves rather than fruit. To counteract this tendency the vine grower severely prunes each vine during the winter months.

Jesus says we are pruned by his words. It is through listening to him that we stay on the right course and produce fruit. If we don't do this, if we don't remain attached to him, then we are like dead branches that are good for nothing but to be thrown away. There is no easy choice: we either submit to being pruned, that is, to be formed and developed by his teaching, or we are thrown on the fire. Jesus will go on to say that this is the mystery of his love, the Father's love for him and his love for us. Bound to him through this love we can survive the troubles earthly life brings us and be able in our turn to bear the love that will last.

We sometimes think of our lives as purely enclosed by our individual occupations and relationships. Our responsibilities end at the garden gate. The state of our present world urges us to extend that viewpoint so that we ask more wide-reaching questions. Is there anything I can do in my life that will make this world a better place to live in? The image of the vine as expressed by Jesus may help us to find a way of responding to this challenge. As Jesus sees it, we can only bear fruit if we are in union with him. We celebrate that union in the Eucharist, where his word also helps us to see our way more clearly. The fruit we then bear is not restricted to being kind to our family and friends but to seeing how our stewardship of the world may best be achieved. If this is done by working with nature rather than against it, it is also achieved by working with the many others who are working with the same intent, even if their values and motivation may, in other ways, differ from ours.

The fruit we are trying to bear is literally a fruit that will last and is grown, not through exploitation, but through cooperation and shared goodwill - and as the civil rights anthem once encouraged us, "we shall overcome someday!"

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Altar Servers: "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain." -1 Cor 15:58. Serving our God and King at the Altar is a service that brings blessing to all. Inviting all young hearts, who would like to be an Altar Server at weekend Masses. Children must have made their First Holy Communion. Please get in touch with Daphne for more information at daffy24@gmail.com or 07459 343539.

Altar Servers Training for current and new Altar Servers will take place on Saturdays 4th, 18th and 25th May at 10.30am.

Mass Intentions. If you wish to book a Mass, please drop your intention envelope in the box at the back of the church in the offertory collection or through the presbytery letterbox. *Please use the new blue donation envelopes if you can make your Mass offering under Gift Aid.*

Bucket Collection. The Bucket Collection is for the Princess Alice Hospice. You will find the donation box in the wall at the back of the church.

Michael Christopher Colgan RIP. The Funeral will take place on Tuesday, 7th May at 11.00 am at St Michael's Church.

Jim Gibson RIP. The Funeral will take place on Thursday, 9th May at 12.20 pm at Hanworth Crematorium.

Dr Sue McFarlane RIP. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Sue McFarlane who died recently. Sue was a parishioner of St Michael's for many years before she moved back to her parish closer to her home in Lightwater. The Funeral will take place on **Monday 13th May at 12 noon** at Christ the King Catholic Church, Bagshot.

Baptism Preparation Course. The next Baptism Preparation Course is on Saturday 6th July 2024 at 10.00 am in the presbytery meeting room. If you require the Sacrament of Baptism for your child in July, August and September 2024 then you will need to contact ashfordcatechist@rcdow.org.uk so that the necessary paperwork can be finalised before the date of the course.

Repository. First Holy Communion Ties are now on sale at £5.99 each. Also on sale is a selection of Cards, Gifts and Missals at very reasonable prices. Payment is accepted by cash (*box in the wall in the Repository*) or card (*Dona machine in the narthex – select the Repository tab and then enter the amount required to pay*). Thank you for being so supportive to the parish.

The Divine Mercy Apostolate, London is holding a First Saturday Divine Mercy Recollection Day at the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, on Saturday 1st June 2024 from 11.00 am to 4:30 pm. The Recollection Day will include a Message of Mercy, Holy Mass, Stations of the Cross, and Hour of Mercy with Adoration and Benediction. All welcome. Please call Millie on 07957 594646 for more information. Coaches from Ealing Broadway and Victoria.

The Crown of Thorns is a UK Charity that sends religious items to the Missions. Do you have you any religious statues, rosaries, books, pictures, etc. that you would like to donate? If so, please bring to the presbytery during office hours.

CAFOD and St Vincent de Paul Society - A Year of Encounter. With a UK general election due sometime this year, politicians will be looking for our votes. We have a responsibility as Catholics to make sure that parties commit to tackling issues such as poverty and injustice. Raising our voices and contacting parliamentary candidates as a parish community will send a strong signal to those standing for election in our local constituencies. A *Year of Encounter* is a joint initiative between CAFOD and St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP), equipping Catholics to ask key questions of local candidates at the key moments. Please see cafod.org.uk/encounter for more information, including an online session on Saturday 4th May to learn more.

This Sunday's readings, Fifth Sunday of Easter, 28th April

Acts 9: 26-31; 1 John 3; 18-24; John 15; 1-8

Next Sunday's readings, Sixth Sunday of Easter, 5th May

Acts 10: 25-26, 34-35, 44-48; 1 John 4: 7-10; John 15: 9-17

Offertory Collection. Thank you for your offertories last week:

Loose Plate £522.40; Envelopes £199.00; Standing Orders £900.00

Contactless £137.00 (*The Dona contactless PayPoint is in the narthex*)

Priest Training Fund: £235.82

Bucket Collection (TALK Surrey): £70.61

MANNA Foodbank. This week's shortages: *Fruit Squash; Tinned Fruit - pineapple, pears, fruit salad, apricots (we have good stocks of peaches); Tinned Custard; Cup a Soup; Cereal/Breakfast Bars; Tinned Potatoes; Tinned Salmon/Sardines/Mackerel etc (we have good stocks of Tuna); Tinned Butter Beans, Kidney Beans, Mixed Bean Salad etc (we have good stocks of chick peas); Loose Rice in 500gm packs; Dried Spaghetti in 500gm packs; Instant Coffee; Sugar both large and small bags; Crisps; Batchelors Pasta N Sauce Pouches or similar; Instant Mash (Smash type); Tinned Cold Meat - Ham, SPAM, Luncheon Meat, Chicken (we have good stocks of corned beef); Disposable Razors; Liquid Handwash; Shaving Foam/Gel; Toilet Paper; Kitchen Roll; Toothpaste; Single Adult Toothbrushes; Shower Gel; Shampoo. We are very short on Crackers and Spreads - Jam, Peanut Butter, Chocolate Spread, Marmalade.*

Please leave your donations on the Presbytery doorstep or in the Narthex.

Safeguarding If you've any concerns or require advice regarding the safety or well-being of a child or vulnerable adult, please contact our parish safeguarding rep, Tiziana Demurtas on 07778 533932 or ashfordsg@safeguardrcdow.org.uk

You can also contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team on 020 7798 9356 or safeguarding@rcdow.org.uk

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

During Adoration after Saturday morning Mass (and by appointment)

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

To arrange a baptism please refer to the parish website:

(see: Parish Life → Sacramental Preparation → Baptism

For the parish Mass timetable, please refer to the parish website:

<http://parish.rcdow.org.uk/ashford>

PLEASE PRAY

for all the sick and housebound in our parish.

for anniversaries in April since 2017: Margerida Borges, Brian Cook, Alcina DaSilva, Anne Gates, Christine Hunter, Ian Kunzi, Peter McDonnell, Mary McGann, Joan McMullen, Mary McTernan, Domingo Monteiro, Joe Redmond, Mary Savage, Carmela Tirone, Patricia Trussler.

for Fr Sean Church and the parishioners of St Francis de Sales, Hampton Hill in the Upper Thames Deanery.

for the Holy Father's Prayer Intention that the dignity and worth of women be recognised in every culture, and for an end to the discrimination they face in various parts of the world.

Mass Intentions 28th April – 5th May

Sun 28 th	Fifth Sunday of Easter		
(Saturday Vigil Mass)	06.00pm		
	09.15am	The people of the parish	
	11.30am	Greg and Esther's intentions	
	06.00pm	Jim Gibson RIP	
Mon 29 th	St Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor of the Church, Patron of Europe		
	09.15am	Aloysius Andrade RIP	
Tues 30 th	09.15am	Rocky Fernandes RIP	
Wed 1 st	06.00pm	Celio Rodrigues – birthday wishes	
Fri 3 rd	Ss Philip and James, Apostles		
	09.15am	Emma and Daniel Horsey's intentions	
Sat 4 th	The English Martyrs		
	09.15am	Jennifer Gooneratne RIP	
Sun 5 th	Sixth Sunday of Easter		
(Saturday Vigil Mass)	06.00pm		
	09.15am	Alberto Muyco RIP	
	11.30am	Thomas Abbey RIP	
	06.00pm	The people of the parish	

St Michael's Catholic Church

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Website: <http://parish.rcdow.org.uk/ashford>

This parish is part of the Westminster Catholic Diocese Trustee Charity no. 233699

Fr Sidon Sagar FDP: Parish Priest, Fr Carlo Mazzotta FDP: Assistant Priest

Parish Secretary: Mrs Shenda Holmes

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 9.00 am – 1.00 pm