

St Michael and All Angels Catholic Church

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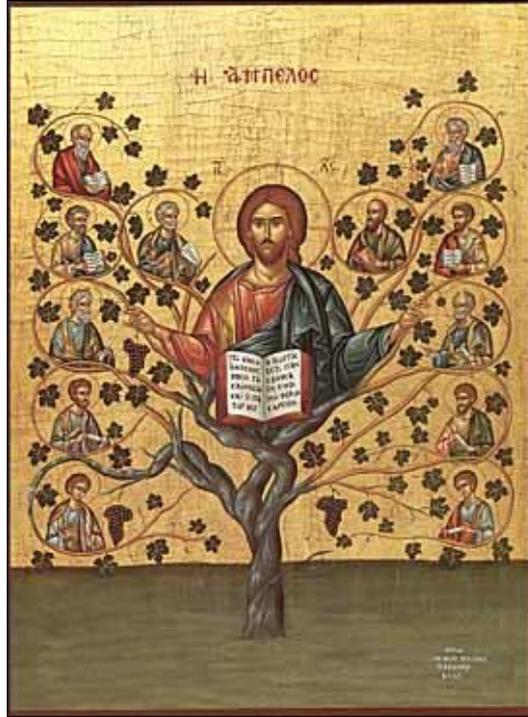
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The vine and the branches: Fifth Sunday of Easter, 2nd May 2021

Prayer of the Church: Week 1



Icon of Christ the True Vine, late 20th century, Dormition Convent, Parnes, Greece, based on an early 15th century icon by Angelos Akotantos

Scripture Readings at Mass

The first reading tells us about some of the trials that St Paul endured after his conversion. (Acts 9:26-31)

St John reflects on Christ's commandment of love. (1 John 3:18-24)

Jesus uses the image of the vine and its branches to illustrate how close are the ties that bind him to his disciples. (John 15:1-8)

Prayer for vocations *Lord Jesus, the ministry of priests is a sign of your unfailing care. Call from among us the priests needed for today and tomorrow. Bless all students for the priesthood. Grant them joy, wisdom, courage and a generous spirit. Sustain priests with a real sense of your love and the support of those they are called to serve. Keep them faithful to their calling. Amen.*

Please pray for Howard Wright, Neil Heath and Eileen Brawn, recovering from surgery.

JPII Award for Young People

The Diocese are launching the JPII award, inviting people aged 15-18 to participate. This faith achievement award seeks to reward and celebrate the efforts of young people in our diocese, marking their outstanding contribution to the life of the Church. It is non-competitive, inclusive, flexible and voluntary. Many of our young people are already readers, ministers of the Eucharist, altar servers and so on. Many, through the DoFE award, are already contributing to works of charity through volunteering. All this can help towards the JPII award. Sarah Farrell, Oaklands School Chaplain, leads this initiative at Oaklands and has information about getting started.

s.farrell@oaklandscatholicsschool.org

<https://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/jp-ii-award> & <https://thepopejohnpauliiaward.com/portsmouth/>

Newsletter for the week beginning Sunday 2nd May 2021

Thank you for helping us all by adhering to the requirements to wear a face-covering, to use sanitiser & to sit where our stewards & the seat signs indicate.

Prayer of the Church: Week 1

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available during the half hour before Mass.

We livestream on Facebook and our website.

<http://www.stmichaelsleighpark.org.uk/>  <http://www.stmichaelsleighpark.org.uk/>

Saturday 1st May, St Joseph the Worker

Canon Gerard is at the Diocesan Vocations Discernment Conference, so unavailable for morning Mass. Please pray for everyone at the Conference.

6 pm Mass for the intentions of the Parish and with the baptism of Filip Beres

2nd May, Fifth Sunday of Easter

10 am Mass Dot Bates RIP

11.30 am Mass for the intentions of parishioners affected by Covid19

Monday, 3rd May, Ss Philip & James

10 am Mass Mary Creightan RIP (Alice Judge's request)

Tuesday, 4th May, The English Martyrs

10 am Mass for Victims and Survivors of Abuse

5th May, Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

10 am Mass Kevin O'Neill (Margaret Messenger's request)

10.30 – 11.30 am Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

6th May, Thursday of the Fifth Week of Easter

10 am Mass Sardar Muhammad Sadiq RIP (Peter Garretty-Crane's request)

7th May, Friday of the Fifth Week of Easter

10 am Mass Maria Thomson & the Wren family (GDF's request)

8th May, Saturday of the Fifth Week of Easter

10 am Mass Mary Creightan RIP (Alice Judge's request)

6 pm Mass for the intentions of the Parish

9th May, Sixth Sunday of Easter

10 am Mass Neil Heath's intentions

11.30 am Mass Howard Wright's intentions

The additional 11.30 am Mass continues until a review late in July.

First Holy Communion Prayer Partners needed please.

Thank you for your response to the appeal for people to pray daily for one of our First Holy Communion children. They will pray for you. We now have 25 volunteers for 29 children. Any last offers please to Canon Gerard. gerardflynn@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Here is a prayer about Holy Communion.

Dear God, You give me many gifts. The gift of Your Son Jesus Christ in Holy Communion is the greatest of all. How can I ever thank You for this gift? At Mass we are called to be like Jesus, by loving and serving one another in the world. As I become more like Him, please continue to help me. Show me the places and ways that I can bring Your love, kindness, and peace to others.... in my family, in my neighbourhood, in my community, with my friends.

I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

First reading Acts 9:26-31

When Saul got to Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him: they could not believe he was really a disciple. Barnabas, however, took charge of him, introduced him to the apostles, and explained how the Lord had appeared to Saul and spoken to him on his journey, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. Saul now started to go round with them in Jerusalem, preaching fearlessly in the name of the Lord. But after he had spoken to the Hellenists, and argued with them, they became determined to kill him. When the brothers knew, they took him to Caesarea, and sent him off from there to Tarsus. The churches throughout Judaea, Galilee and Samaria were now left in peace, building themselves up, living in the fear of the Lord, and filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm 21(22):26-28,30-32

You, Lord, are my praise in the great assembly.

My vows I will pay before those who fear him.

The poor shall eat and shall have their fill.

They shall praise the Lord, those who seek him.

May their hearts live for ever and ever!

You, Lord, are my praise in the great assembly.

All the earth shall remember and return to the Lord,

all families of the nations worship before him;

They shall worship him, all the mighty of the earth;

before him shall bow all who go down to the dust.

You, Lord, are my praise in the great assembly.

And my soul shall live for him, my children serve him.

They shall tell of the Lord to generations yet to come,

declare his faithfulness to peoples yet unborn:

'These things the Lord has done.'

You, Lord, are my praise in the great assembly.

Second reading 1 John 3:18-24

My children, our love is not to be just words or mere talk, but something real and active; only by this can we be certain that we are children of the truth and be able to quieten our conscience in his presence, whatever accusations it may raise against us, because God is greater than our conscience and he knows everything. My dear people, if we cannot be condemned by our own conscience, we need not be afraid in God's presence, and whatever we ask him, we shall receive, because we keep his commandments and live the kind of life that he wants. His commandments are these: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and that we love one another as he told us to. Whoever keeps his commandments lives in God and God lives in him. We know that he lives in us by the Spirit that he has given us.

Gospel Acclamation Alleluia, alleluia! Make your home in me, as I make mine in you. Whoever remains in me bears fruit in plenty. Alleluia!

Gospel John 15:1-8

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more. You are pruned already, by means of the word that I have spoken to you. Make your home in me, as I make mine in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is like a branch that has been thrown away – he withers; these branches are collected and thrown on the fire, and they are burnt. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask what you will and you shall get it. It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples.'

Homily notes for the Fifth Sunday of Easter 2nd May 2021, GDF

Jesus said to his disciples:

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.
Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away,
and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more.*

They say that we are what we eat.

That must, in some ways, be true.

Our bodies are made up of all that they ingest.

We know the benefits of eating well; we know, too, what it is to eat foolishly.

We choose what we eat; we choose the way that we are.

When I think that I am what I eat, it makes me pause to think about my diet!

Am I eating and drinking the right stuff?

Another image: a few weeks ago I put in the little Oratory, my prayer room in the house, a plant. It added a gentle note of nature, and of green, to my prayer.

By the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle I put one of plants which Neil Heath leaves as gifts for people to take in exchange for a donation to Parish Funds.

That was before the operation from which Neil is, thank God, recovering so well.

But I failed to notice that it was getting thirsty.

One morning this week it had collapsed from lack of water.

Had I left things too late?

I watered it and left it on the kitchen window-sill.

I checked on it at odd moments during the day.

The stem and the leaves began to pick themselves up.

They began to fill themselves out again with the water.

They stood up straight.

Quite quickly the plant was fully alive and ready to return to the Oratory.

From what are we drawing life each moment of our lives?

What do we spend most of our moments doing?

If we are what we eat what about our mind? How do we nourish that?

If I watch nothing but trash on TV I know that my brain turns to mush.

Have you ever woken in the morning with your mind full of what you watched the evening before?

A friend of mine, the other week, told me that she dreamt the outcome of episode five of *Line of Duty*.

Did Kate Fleming or Ryan Pilkington come off worse in the shoot-out?

Fascinating as my friend's dream was, episode six told me that she got it so wrong.

But she showed how good TV drama can get right into our system.

If I spend each day in awe at the wonder of all the music that I hear,

at the beauty of all the art that I love,

at all the poetry and prose that I read, I invariably feel uplifted.

But if all I do is watch mindless trash, and depressing news, how am I going to feel?

If I get stuck on social media and let myself be bounced from one miserable message to the next, how is that helping me any?

If we are what we eat and if our mind reflects all that we fill it with what about our spirit? How do we nourish that?

I know people whose first words each day really are *This is your day, Lord! Thank you!*

Then their every breathing moment draws in God's Spirit.

Whatever happens they are grateful.

They turn every instant to God's glory,

to their neighbour's good and to their own fulfilment.

Just like Neil's plant, their lives fill out with vigour and vitality.

And if they flag, through sin and weakness, they draw in new life through the Sacraments.

When we feed and water our Spiritual Life it thrives.

Pope Francis says it in that beautiful letter, ***Gaudete et exsultate***, which he wrote to us.

Rejoice and exult. *We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain.* ***Gaudete et exsultate #14***

When we draw life from Jesus, as branches do from the vine, we flourish and are fulfilled.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.

Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away,

and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more.

So be grateful ... even for the gripes and the groans that we sometimes emit!

They can be useful warning signs about what we need to make better, just like those wilting leaves told me to give the plant a life-giving drink.

For May, the month of Mary, I strongly recommend that we pray the Rosary.

Our newsletter contains a handy guide. I urge you to pray as you can, not as you can't.

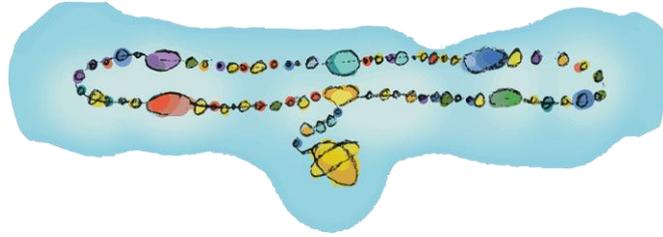
A decade a day might seem tough to some of us on 1st May.

But if you do it when you go for a walk just check out how much fitter you are, physically and spiritually, by the time that June comes around!



Jesus with a laughing baby, by Deb Minnard

May is the Month of Mary and an ideal time to pray The Rosary



The Rosary prayer begins with the *Sign of the Cross* at the Crucifix. On the single beads say the *Our Father*, and on the ten beads together say the *Hail Mary*. After each series of *Hail Marys* say the *Glory Be*.

During the prayers on each series of ten beads, or decade, we meditate on one of the Mysteries. With children you might say one Mystery to begin with, building up as time goes by. You can always adjust the number of *Hail Marys* you say to help your child develop at their own pace. It is spiritually rich to meditate upon the Mysteries of the Rosary listed below.

(Mondays and Saturdays) The Joyful Mysteries

The Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38)

The Visitation (Luke 1: 39-56)

The Nativity (Luke 2:1-20)

The Presentation (Luke 2:21-38)

The Finding of Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41-52)

Spiritual fruit - Humility

Spiritual fruit - Love of Neighbour

Spiritual fruit - Poverty of Spirit

Spiritual fruit - Purity of mind & body

Spiritual fruit - Obedience

(Thursdays) The Luminous Mysteries or Mysteries of Light

Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan (Matthew 3:17)

Jesus at the wedding of Cana (John 2:1- 12)

Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God (John 20:22-23)

Jesus' Transfiguration (Luke 9:35)

Jesus' institution of the Eucharist (1 Corinthians 11:24-25)

Spiritual fruit - Gratitude for Faith

Spiritual fruit - Fidelity

Spiritual fruit - Desire for Holiness

Spiritual fruit - Spiritual Courage

Spiritual fruit - Love of our Lord

(Tuesdays and Fridays) The Sorrowful Mysteries

The Agony in the Garden (Matthew 26:36-46)

The Scourging at the Pillar (Matthew 27:26)

The Crowning with Thorns (Matthew 27:27-30)

The Carrying of the Cross (Matthew 27:31-32)

The Crucifixion (Matthew 27:33-56)

Spiritual fruit - God's will be done

Spiritual fruit - Mortification of the senses

Spiritual fruit - Reign of Christ in our heart

Spiritual fruit - Patient bearing of trials

Spiritual fruit - Pardoning of Injuries

(Wednesdays and Sundays) The Glorious Mysteries

The Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-8)

The Ascension (Acts 1:6-11)

The Descent of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:1-13)

The Assumption

The Coronation of Our Lady

Spiritual fruit - Faith

Spiritual fruit - Christian Hope

Spiritual fruit - Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Spiritual fruit - To Jesus through Mary

Spiritual fruit - Final Perseverance

The Our Father (Lord's Prayer)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen

The Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The Glory be

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.

When will things return to normal?

Canon Gerard writes: *Thanks be to God for the generosity of people in observing Covid19 restrictions so carefully, for the exemplary vaccination programme, and for the open-hearted and gracious ways in which so many people are striving to help others in particular need at this time. At our recent Pastoral Area Clergy meeting (still via Teams, rather than in person just at the moment) we recorded thanks to Fr Daniel Agber and Deacon Kim Cabatana, who serve as hospital chaplains. Many of our own parishioners at St Michael's work in the NHS and in the care sector. They do so with really noble and loving commitment! Let's show our true gratitude by keeping them constantly in our prayers.*

Some parishioners have told me how much they are looking forward to the day when we can safely use again all those God-given talents at Mass, such as serving, reading and singing as a congregation. It will be wonderful to share a sign of peace with more than just a bow, to share in Precious Blood at Communion and to know that there are those back among us who have had to stay away from the risks of infection. We constantly look to guidance from the Government, and the Bishops' Conference, and will respond as soon as safely can. In the meantime, we must always depend on prayer.

Loving God, in Christ Jesus, the servant of all, you call us to the service of others.

Grant to those who govern the community the skill to recognise its urgent needs and the strength to pursue the common good. Endow us all with patience and courage, that we may care for the suffering, feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, and sustain the needy.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Giovanni Battista Salvi, The Virgin at Prayer, 1609-1685

Invocation of Our Lady Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To you I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy, hear and answer me.

Tuesday 4th May is a Day of Prayer for Survivors of Abuse

Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God; and he cured those who were in need of healing. Matthew 4:12

A Prayer for Healing & Reconciliation

Praise to you Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, source of all consolation and hope.

Be the refuge and guardian of all who suffer abuse and violence.

Comfort them with healing for their wounds of the body, soul and spirit. Help us all.

Make us one with you in your love for justice as we deepen our respect for the dignity of every human life. Giver of peace, make us one in celebrating your praise, both now and forever. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A wild flower meadow ... in the making!

We are preparing some of the land by the car park to be a wild flower meadow. Community Payback workers and wonderful Parish volunteers have got the grounds looking very good just now. We have some detritus to be removed, some more preparation of the land and some compost to be put in ready for the seeds that you see in the boxes above.



As ever, we would be most grateful for donations towards the cost of around £583. When it all takes off it should help butterfly and bee life in our own back yard and complement the memorial garden. This area is looking especially good just now; we are grateful for another generous donation which made this possible a few years ago.

Some more thoughts from Pope Francis in Gaudete et Exsultate.

The paragraph numbers follow the quote.

We need a spirit of holiness capable of filling both our solitude and our service, our personal life and our evangelizing efforts, so that every moment can be an expression of self-sacrificing love in the Lord's eyes. In this way, every minute of our lives can be a step along the path to growth in holiness. (31)

When somebody has an answer for every question, it is a sign that they are not on the right road. They may well be false prophets, who use religion for their own purposes, to promote their own psychological or intellectual theories. God infinitely transcends us; he is full of surprises. (41)

Even when someone's life appears completely wrecked, even when we see it devastated by vices or addictions, God is present there. If we let ourselves be guided by the Spirit rather than our own preconceptions, we can and must try to find the Lord in every human life. (42)

Those faithful to God and his word, by their self-giving, gain true happiness. (64)

Rosalie Cuthbert writes: Some people in the poorest parts of the world walk 10 hours daily for water for their family. I am proud that I walked 10,000 daily steps in CAFOD's **Walk for Water** Lent campaign, raising money for solar powered water pumps. I pledge now to raise £750 for a village water pump & would be grateful for donations to my Just Giving Page: <http://cafod.walk.org.uk/fundraising/ROSALIE-CUTHBERT66>