

ST GEORGE'S NEWSLETTER

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Today's homily has been provided by the Right Reverend Bishop Michael Langrish
Former Bishop of Exeter and Honorary Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Chichester



Today's Gospel: Matthew 13 - 1-9 & 18-21

The sower went out to sow

In today's Gospel we read the parable of the sower – perhaps one of the best known of Jesus' stories? A farmer scatters seed on his land. Some seeds fell on the path and was eaten by birds. Other seeds fell on rocky ground and withered in the heat of the day. More seeds fell among thorns, which choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced a good harvest.

What might this have to say to you and me? The first question to spring to mind is probably: 'What kind of soil am I?' "Am I among those who hear, but don't understand?" Or "Did I once receive the faith with joy, but, if I am honest, was it all rather short lived and

shallow??" Or "Did I hear the word, but then other things in my life took over and I haven't been as fruitful as I might have been?" Or do I think of myself as one who has heard the word, understood, and let it make a real difference to my life?

Actually, just a moment's thought should make us see that it's not very helpful to think this way. The reality is that we **all** have **each** of the different types of soil **within** ourselves. I need only pause for a moment to recognise the whole lot in almost every day of my life. Some areas of our lives almost certainly are good soil and we truly show the fruits of God's grace in good deeds, kind words, thoughtful actions, the kind of self-knowledge that enables us to see ourselves as we truly are.

But all of us also have our rocky patches, our prickly periods, or areas of our lives where Jesus, and his implications for our actions and attitudes, is only grudgingly accepted, or finds little place in our practical everyday living. Then there may be those bits of us which lack the foundation to truly cultivate the good habits of the Christian life – prayer, charity, service – because we are too busy, too anxious, too afraid. The rocks and thorns in our lives may take the form of resentment, defensiveness, anger, selfishness, complacency, hurts – old and new.

We are all, in reality, a complete mixture.

The good news is this. The sower goes on sowing the seed, no matter where it lands. God has no favourites; he showers his love, his gifts, his patience, his healing – on **all** of us, all the time. He may be pretty wasteful as a farmer, but he is amazingly generous and long-suffering as a lover, as a Master and a friend.

So, the real question is not what kind of soil am I? Rather How do I recognise the different patches of soil within me, all of which are always there to some degree? Why is it that we find some of God's graces, or Jesus teaching, easy to accept, and others so hard? Why is it that our faith can seem to take root in some areas of our life but not in others? How come that I can co-operate with the Holy Spirit in some parts of my life but not others? What leads to me being able to see where God sows in some people more easily than in others?

Understood properly this parable is a really useful tool for helping us to look back over each day, asking 'what kind of soil was I then? . . . or there? . . . in that conversation with X? . . . or when I did that to (or didn't do that for) Y? And with God's grace what might I learn from this for the new field, tomorrow, which is still waiting to be sown?

Day by day, week by week, as we turn to God in repentance, seeking his abundant renewing grace, we will still be a mixture, still have lives that are at various times prickly, stony, prey to things that try to pull us away from our walk with Jesus. But still he goes on sowing his life in us, committed to helping us become that little more productive day by day. For, as we read in today's Old Testament reading:

as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

God bless you, + Michael

We thank Bishop Michael for his contribution to our newsletter and hope that all being well he will lead us in worship on Sunday August 2nd.

We are delighted to announce that Bishop Martin has asked Father John Hall to become a sequestrator for St George's during the period when we are without a priest, (Interregnum). Father John will join us on the PCC and will take some services, he is also willing to carry out pastoral duties, including weddings, funerals and visits, normally carried out by the priest.



Father John, or to give him his full title, The Very Reverend John R. Hall, KCVO, BA, Hon DD, Hon DTheol, FRSA, was the Dean of Westminster Abbey from 2006 to 2019, before that he was the Chief Education Officer of the Church of England from 2002 to 2006. He has been a governor of 10 schools and two universities, a member of two local authority education committees and of the General Teaching Council for England. On his retirement from Westminster Dr Hall was awarded the honour of the KCVO (Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order) by Her Majesty The Queen.

Both Ken and Geraldine met with Father John during this past week and you will have gathered from the above potted biography, we are extremely fortunate, at St George's to be able to call upon Father John's experience. He is to take our first service since the lock down on **Sunday 19th July**, (*information on this event to be found elsewhere in the newsletter*).

Incidentally being a sequestrator is simply an ecclesiastical term for being trustee of the income of the church, which is primarily any marriage, baptism and burial fees paid during the vacancy, they also ensure that services are maintained in the parish church and that the pastoral needs of the parishioners are looked after. During an interregnum churchwarden automatically become the sequestrators of the benefice along with the Rural Dean.

Opening of St George's Church for Sunday Services

As of **Sunday 19th July, @ 10.am**, Sunday Mass will resume at St George's. As well as the risk assessment and cleaning programme we have been required to carry out, and along with guidance from Bishop Martin regarding the role of the priest, which has also been part of the risk assessment, we now feel ready to advise that everything has been carried out in the protecting of us all against the invisible coronavirus. There will obviously be some changes to the normal Sunday Mass which are listed below. Please do read and take note so that it won't come as a surprise as and when you feel ready to return to church.

- The seating has been rearranged to provide 2 metres between each seat. If you come as a couple you may not be able to sit immediately next to each other. We have set aside two lots of 4 seats to accommodate families.
- Although optional you are welcome to wear your own face mask or there will be some available in church.
- When you enter the church, you will be requested to sanitise your hands and again as you leave the church. Please enter via the West doors and leave via the West doors or South Porch.
- Before the commencement of the service you will be asked for your name and contact No. to support the NHS Track & Trace system. This information will be kept for 21 days and then destroyed.
- You will be advised that following the end of mass you should leave your seat and exit the church. Please do not attempt to hold a conversation with anyone.
- Hymn singing is not permitted but Susan will be playing the organ at various times.
- At the Eucharist, the priest (Fr John), after sanitising his hands, will receive on our behalf the bread and wine and then he will walk to each individual to place the Host (bread) into the hand avoiding physical contact. Please do not speak, do not say Amen out loud!
- The priest will give the Peace, but the congregation should **not** communicate with anyone.
- The service sheet and readings will be available on each seat. Please take your copy away with you, do not leave behind in the church.
- There will be no cushions, kneelers, books, toys etc, all have been removed during this time.
- Also, please note, there will be no toilet facilities.

We realise that the above looks rather daunting but be assured it is all intended for our wellbeing and all churches are having to follow similar guidelines. If you have a concern please do contact either Ken or Geraldine, contact details at the top of the 1st page.

Changes to the days of opening at St George's for Private Prayer

With the commencement of Sunday Mass on the 19th and along with the required cleaning programme the decision has been taken to reduce the number of days when the church will be open for private prayer.

As of week commencing **13th July, (next week)** the church will only be open on **Wednesdays, 10.30am – 4.30pm**. Please accept our apologies if this is going to cause a problem for those who like to pop in for a while but it was the only solution we could come up with, taking everything into consideration.

Coffee Morning – Saturday 18th July 10.30am – 12.30am



As mentioned in last week's newsletter we will be holding an event in the Centenary Centre to bring members of St George's family together. A team of volunteers are preparing for the event of which we hope you will be able to attend.

We are trying to think of everything to protect visitors and volunteers alike, so firstly, on arrival you will need to give your name and contact details and then to sanitise your hands.

There will be stalls with garden produce/plants, books, unwanted gifts and various crafts. If you have anything you would like to donate please do get in touch with either Sue Bainbridge 784424 or Geraldine 539620 and we will arrange collection.

Items will be priced beforehand and "honesty" containers will be available to drop your money into.

There will be face masks available or bring your own if you prefer, the wearing of a mask is purely optional.

Toilet facilities will be available, using the larger unit, near to the kitchen. Please follow the instructions on the wall.

At the Centre please enter via the double patio doors, and a waitress will take your drinks order, please state whether you prefer a mug or cup & saucer. If you would like something to eat, she will place your chosen item(s) on a plate for you to take with you, and then will collect your drink from the kitchen and take to wherever you are sitting or standing. There will be a container adjacent to the food table for any donations and, **Thank You** in advance!

We want you to enjoy the occasion and of course catch up with others but please..... do remember to keep to the social distancing of currently 2 metres.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to our Treasurer, Jane Martin who became a grandmother for the first time on Thursday 2nd July.

Her son and daughter-in-law became the proud parents of a baby boy, weighing in at 8lb 10oz.

His name is Theodore but will be known as Teddie.

The arrival of Teddie also make Doreen and Garry Long proud Great Grandparents.



With Love and Congratulations to Jane, Doreen and Garry on the new arrival to their family and of course, to the proud parents! From all at St George's x