

No Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on Tuesday 30th April.

“**Awakening**” is here, a Eucharistic Adoration initiative taking place all across the UK to Pentecost Sunday. Join us here at St. Stephen’s as we gather in prayer before the Eucharist Lord next Saturday (27th April), from 10.30am to 4.30pm. This initiative is being organised by the *Jesus Youth* movement.

St George’s Cathedral: Second Collection
This Weekend 27th / 28th April

For over half a century, St George’s Cathedral has been the Mother Church of the Archdiocese of Southwark, home to 175 parishes and over 50,000 Roman Catholics. For many Catholics living and working across London and the South East of England, St George’s has been a beacon of light. Today, St George’s Cathedral continues to attract thousands of worshippers and visitors each year, as well as serving a lively local parish community which proudly reflects the rich cultural and ethnic diversity of South London. The Cathedral frequently hosts important Diocesan and national celebrations, as well as concerts and events for various Catholic charities. There is a rich musical tradition, maintaining a choir of boys and men, as well as a girls’ choir, both of which sing at Sunday Masses and on major feasts. In many respects, St George’s Cathedral serves as a spiritual home and ‘beehive’ for Catholic evangelisation and mission across the Archdiocese of Southwark.

St George’s Cathedral is entirely reliant upon the generosity of its parishioners, volunteers and the Archdiocese of Southwark to keep its doors open. It does not receive Vatican or government funding, nor has an endowment to rely on. Your support can enable the Cathedral to remain open daily to those seeking a place of peace, prayer and worship. Thank you!

- Donate Online: www.rcaos.org.uk/Cathedral
- Or Scan QR Code using telephone camera (below)
- Telephone weekdays 9 am – 5 pm: 020 7960 2504
- Cash / Cheque – Gift aiders please use the envelope in your GA box.
- Digital Collection Plate at the back of the church



Online Parish Gift Aid Declaration Sign-up: Support our parish and make your donations go further by signing a valid Gift Aid Declaration form. Go to <https://forms.rcaos.org.uk/giftaid>.

Young Adults’ Masses at St George’s Cathedral on Sunday 5th May at 12pm (and on the first Sunday of every month), followed by a social gathering (for those aged 18+) in the Amigo Hall. You can find details of this and other young adult events at St George’s Cathedral on Facebook and Instagram @stgeorgesya or [Southwark Catholic Youth Service: Archdiocese of Southwark \(rcsouthwark.co.uk\)](http://Southwark Catholic Youth Service: Archdiocese of Southwark (rcsouthwark.co.uk))

The Southwark Catholic Youth Service has several activities for those aged 10-35. For details of what is on offer, please sign up to receive regular updates at <https://form.jotform.com/230894642403052>

St George’s Cathedral, has won an award of recognition from the Mayor of Lambeth for its significant contributions to the local community. The award, presented by Mayor Cllr Sarbaz Barznji to Cathedral Dean Canon Michael Branch, praises the Cathedral for its “*years of dedicated service to the Community*”. The work of the Cathedral to helping build a “*healthy and vibrant community*” is also praised. To read more please go to [St George’s Cathedral recognised for its years of dedicated service: Archdiocese of Southwark \(rcsouthwark.co.uk\)](http://St George’s Cathedral recognised for its years of dedicated service: Archdiocese of Southwark (rcsouthwark.co.uk))

Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Hartley on Saturday 4th May from 12pm (light refreshments served from 11.30am). The pilgrimage will include reflections, hymns and prayers to Our Lady, ending with Adoration before the Parish Mass at 5.30pm. The pilgrimage is a wonderful way to participate in devotions honouring Our Blessed Lady during May. St Francis de Sales Church, Church Road, Hartley, Kent DA3 8DW. The day will also be live-streamed at www.churchservices.tv/hartley

The Golden Jubilee of ordination to the priesthood of Archbishop Kevin McDonald will be on 20th July 2024. Archbishop Kevin will be marking this anniversary by preaching at the Celebration of Priesthood Mass in St George’s Cathedral on *Friday 31 May*. Archbishop John will be the principal Celebrant of the Mass, which will begin at 12:30pm. Archbishop Kevin would like to extend a special invitation to all of the archdiocese to join him at this Mass, as he would greatly appreciate their presence and support.



ST. STEPHEN’S CHURCH

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Secretary: Mrs. Lorraine Harris. email: wellingsecretary@rcaos.org.uk
School: St. Stephen’s Primary School, Ruskin Avenue, Welling, Kent. DA16 3QG
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Fifth Sunday of Easter (Year B)

Saturday 27th April
5pm Repose of the Soul of Ellen Kelly (Lobo Family)
Sunday 28th April
9.30am People of the Parish
11.30am Malcolm Ireland RIP (M Harmer)
Mon 29th **St Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church, Patron of Europe**
10am Ellen Kelly RIP (J Kelly)
Tues 30th **Feria**
10am Dora O’Connell RIP (P Norville)
7pm **Novena Mass**
Wed 1st May **St Joseph the Worker**
10am Golden Book Subscribers
Thurs 2nd **St Athanasius, Bishop & Doctor of the Church**
10am Parishioners in Thanksgiving (J Kelly)
Fri 3rd **Sts. Philip and James, Apostles**
10am Rowena Govia RIP—anniv
Sat 4th **The English Martyrs**
10am Priest Ints
Sacrament of Reconciliation
Saturday 10.30am—11am & 4pm—4.30pm

Sixth Sunday of Easter (Year B)

Saturday 4th May
5pm Sister Theresa Tham Ngo RIP
Sunday 5th May
9.30am Anthony Lobo—thanksgiving birthday
11.30am People of the Parish

Please remember in your prayers the sick and housebound; at home, in hospital or residential care.

DONATIONS

All donations are greatly appreciated to help support our church & parish. Thank you.

The offertory collection after the Liturgy of the Word during Mass on Saturday evening & Sunday morning is for parishioners who wish to donate with their gift aid envelopes or with loose cash. If you choose to donate via the digital plate in church, online or by standing order, please continue to do so—there is no need to change your chosen method of giving. The collection bag will also be circulated for second collections.

Donate online at <https://portal.myдона.com/assets/webPay/index.php?cid=236> or <https://justgiving.com/campaign/parishsupport>—please include parish name and location or click on the PayPal donate button on www.saintstephens.co.uk. To set up a standing order to make regular monthly donations see bank details below. Please consider signing up to our Gift Aid scheme. Contact the church office for more details.

NatWest Bank
Sort Code: 51-70-14
Account No. 39013332
Account Name: RCAS Welling
Please use your name as a reference (gift aiders please add your envelope number). Thank you.

Digital Collection Plates are situated at the back of the church. Making a donation is simple and quick. Press one of the donation values or Other Amount. Tap your card or phone on the card reader. For donations greater than £45, the card must be inserted. Your donation can be gift aided by completing a digital Gift Aid Declaration on the Digital Collection Plate screen (name, address and email address required) and all future donations you make using this card will automatically be recorded as a gift aid donation. A Gift Aid Declaration is required when using the Digital Collection Plate for the first time even if you are registered for Gift Aid at St Stephen’s.

My dear People

One of the great differences between the Gospel of John and the other three Gospels is that there are no parables as such. The closest John comes to parables is comparisons or figures of speech. Another difference we notice is that John has the fewest of direct Old Testament quotations compared to Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Last Sunday Jesus proclaimed, 'I am the good shepherd', and today we have another 'I am' saying of Jesus, namely 'I am the true Vine.'

To the disciples of Jesus gathered with him at the Last Supper, Jesus compared himself to a vine. Jesus brings about an image that was common at that time. They were a common feature of the landscape, which was also a prominent image in the Jewish Scriptures.

We find in the scriptures Israel is presented as a vine and God as the planter, that is the vinedresser. Jesus using this image tells something about himself, that he is the vine. He does so in relationship with his Father who is the vinedresser and in relationship to his followers, the branches. Only when all three—the vine

dresser, the vine and the branches—are in perfect harmony fruit can be produced.

The various 'I am' sayings of Jesus give an image of the relationship we are called to have with him. Jesus called himself the 'I am the bread of life.' What an ordinary person finds in bread, i.e. nourishment Jesus gives true nourishment through his word and his flesh. In the same way, if Jesus is the true vine, then it is important to belong to him, the true Israel, rather than belong to a particular nation.

When we celebrate Mass, we come together as members of the body of Christ, never as isolated individuals. The Church is the Body of Christ, and each one of us is a part of that body as St. Paul writes to the Corinthians. Writing to the Ephesians Paul speaks of the disciples of Jesus as part of a building, God's household. In each of these three images - the body, the building and the vine - the disciple of Jesus is part of a whole, a member of the church.

God bless and love you all.
Canon Edward

Fifth Sunday of Easter (Year B)

Scripture Insights

Today's first reading appears near the end of chapter 9 of Acts. The opening verses of this chapter recount Saul's request for letters of approval from temple officials. These letters would acknowledge Saul's authority once he reached Damascus, where he intended to persecute followers of Jesus. In verse 3 of this chapter, the first of three accounts of Saul's conversion begins. (Two other recordings of this experience are found in Acts 22:3-16 and 26:4-23.) Thus, it is no wonder that in today's pericope, beginning in verse 26, we hear that the disciples were reticent to believe that Saul had become a follower of Jesus. In a few words, the text details how Barnabas intervened and how the Apostles accepted Saul as one who had seen the Lord. Immediately, Saul began to proclaim that Jesus is Lord.

The reading from the First Letter of John reminds us that love expresses itself most perfectly in action. While words are important, the lived expression of our words spreads a truth more strongly. Belief in Jesus is identified by our actions, our love for one another.

The Gospel of John presents us with the metaphor of the vine and the branches. Jesus identifies himself as the true vine and speaks of his relationship to the Father. Here, Jesus identifies his Father as the vine grower, the one who carefully tends to the vine so that it will bear fruit.

Reflection

• Sometimes it's hard to recognise when someone is on your side, on the same team. For Saul, who wanted to be a part of spreading the Gospel, this meant that he was feared, and disbelieved. Have you ever felt misunderstood? What might we do when we feel deterred from belonging? How might our community be open to those we once feared?

• On its face, it seems so simple: the command is to love. Every Scripture reading seems to point us back to that one central value. And yet even our Church rubrics, leaders, and communities can make the radical love of God feel confined by language and law that seems contrary to this core belief. Where does our confidence in God, the tugging on our hearts, seem to be pulling us next?

• Today's Gospel about the vine and the branches reminds us that we are all connected. If we disconnect, we die. This means that sometimes we are connected to people we'd rather not be, and yet we are called to recognise that they are loved, essential, held by God, too. How might we heal the brokenness or our polarised Church and world by leaning into this truth?

LTP Sourcebook 2024

Many Thanks for your contributions to the *Priest Training Fund* collection which came to £646.54. You can still support our priests of the future with a gift today. Thank you.

- Donate Online: www.rcaos.org.uk/donate/PTF
- Scan QR Code using telephone camera (see below)
- Telephone weekdays 9 am – 5 pm: 020 7960 2504
- Cash / Cheque – please use the Priest Training Fund envelopes at the back of church



Mass Intentions: If you would like to offer a Mass for an intention, please use the Mass Intention Envelopes available on the table at the back of the church and post it through the presbytery letterbox. Please ensure you include your contact number. The recommended stipend (donation) by the Archdiocese for a Mass Intention is £10.

Prayer Intentions Book: Parishioners are invited to write any prayer intentions in our Parish Prayer Intentions book which is placed on the table at the back of the church. Please take time to read the intentions and include them in your prayers.

Volunteers Needed for SPARK in the Park 2024: An invitation to join the team on Thursday 9th May at 8pm or Saturday 11th May at 9.30am for a Zoom meeting. During the meeting we will pray, tell you what we are about and answer questions. We will also present a short video about volunteering and supporting SPARK in the Park 2024. Link to the Zoom meeting - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82816814457?pwd=VXRldHBHUUDJGTmFuQ2hYa2JQQUprUT09>
SPARK in the Park Volunteer Form. <https://www.sparkinthepark.org.uk/volunteer/apply>

Date for the Diary: SPARK in the Park 29th July – 2nd August 2024 1pm – 4.30pm in Danson Park. Each day will feature a range of *free* activities for children of all ages and family events – sports, crafts, inflatables, games, stories, SEN zone, under 5's area and more. Plus, Family Fun nights (complimentary hot dog included) and SPARK Quiz. *SPARKextra* will run similar to the afternoons but aimed at families with older children and adults. <https://www.sparkinthepark.org.uk/>

Parish Garden Day: Next Saturday, 4th May, from 10.30am (weather permitting). Everyone welcome. Please bring your own equipment. Families welcomed—jobs for all. Any amount of time you are able to give will be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Missio Red Boxes: If you have a box to be emptied, please bring it in during the month of April and leave it in the sacristy, ensuring that your name is on the label. Thank you.

Join Archbishop John and Bishop Paul on a pilgrimage to Lourdes from 23 to 30 August 2024. Details on the pilgrimage, including volunteering and accommodation options can be found on [our website](http://ourwebsite.com). Experience the unique spirituality of Lourdes, along with people from parishes around the Archdiocese. Please pick up an information and booking form from the table in the porch. For more information and / or to register your interest please email contact@catholicassociation.co.uk. More details at www.tangney-tours.com/CA see poster.

Migrant Mass: To celebrate the valuable contribution migrants make to life in London and beyond, a special Mass is being held at St George's Cathedral on Monday 6 May at 12.30pm. It will be led by Archbishop John and is in partnership with the dioceses of Westminster and Brentwood, and supported by Justice and Peace and the Ethnic Chaplaincies. Please arrive by 12pm to secure a seat. More details here

Bexley Foodbank: Donations left in the box in the porch are delivered by our volunteers on a Tuesday and Thursday to the Foodbank so please do not donate perishable items (fresh or frozen food items). Locations of food donation points in our area where you can donate fresh food items (including a list of all food items needed) can be viewed on <https://bexley.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/Store cupboard food items> only (no fresh or frozen food) can be left in the box in the porch. Thank you.

Join our Mailing List: To receive our weekly newsletter by email please email wellingsecretary@rcaos.org.uk to subscribe, include your name and confirm your consent to receive our newsletter. You can unsubscribe at any time by notifying the parish office. Your email address will not be shared and used only to receive our newsletter.

SVP & Ink Cartridges: Recycle your old ink cartridges and raise funds for the *St Vincent de Paul Society* by placing them in the box on the table in the porch. Many thanks.