



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Trinity 7 8.30 am and 11 am

Collect for Trinity 7

Lord of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of thy name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I don't know how many of you are keen gardeners but gardening in central London can be a bit tricky. Gardening in Beaumont Street, where the Rectory has been since 1968, is particularly challenging - because there is no garden!

What we do have is a flat roof accessed by climbing seven flights of stairs from pavement level, and on that roof Diana and I have managed to grow (all in pots) roses, hydrangeas, hostas, agapanthus, a golden hop, ferns and a range of herbs.

We did try growing salad crops when we first arrived in London, ten years ago, but soon discovered that ducks flying over the house from Regent's Park kept an all too keen eye ever-open for a quick and easy free lunch from 40 metres!

It has always struck me how much gardening imagery is packed into today's rather short collect:

Lord of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of thy name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same . . .

The language used reminds us that we have to work at our relationship with God, in much the same way as a gardener has to work at getting the best out of their garden plants.

Without constant nourishing, weeding, feeding, pruning and watering a garden (however small) is never going to be at its best or reach its full potential – there is no way that it will flourish.

Sustaining a healthy, flourishing spiritual life requires no less work from us than what it takes to tend a piece of land or a garden: just sitting back and leaving it up to God works no better than scattering a packet of seeds would if we just sat back and did nothing about tending and nurturing them.

Unlike establishing a garden from bare earth (or bare roof tiles in the case of the rectory), we don't have to work on establishing a relationship with God – that is a given, a gift; just as we and the whole of creation is a given, a gift. We are in a relationship with God from the very moment of our conception (God sustains us in being and, when our earthly span is over, we shall be in God for eternity) but how do we turn the fact of

given relationship into a healthy, living and loving flourishing relationship?

How do we set about ‘glorifying God and enjoying him for ever’ as the Catechism puts it?

Traditionally, the Church has suggested a few ways:

1. Reading the Scriptures. Reflecting on how humankind’s journeying with God has been experienced and expressed through the words of the writers of the Old and New testaments and in the Psalms.
2. Living the Faith handed down by the Apostles and countless faithful women and men through the centuries, keeping the truths of our faith alive by living them out in through our daily actions and the informed choices we make; living and working in such a way as befits our dignity as children of our Father and the integrity of God’s creation.
3. Receiving the Church’s Sacraments, regularly and with devotion, especially Eucharistic communion by entering into the saving power of the great Easter mystery through which Christ has accomplished our redemption.
4. Enjoying Fellowship with others who believe, so that we might discover ever new aspects of our faith from them and find the encouragement and support we need to keep believing, trusting, exploring.
5. Praying earnestly and expectantly for God’s Kingdom to come through maintaining disciplined and honest dialogue with God in prayer: asking, thanking, being

open to receive from the God who wants only good things for us and for all his children.

None of these tried and tested ways are new, but unless we roll up our sleeves and get on with them, our spiritual garden might look a bit rubbish: thin etiolated plants, strangled by weeds, thirsty for water; everything just a bit sad and lacklustre.

For months we have been denied the opportunity to engage in our usual ways with the things of faith. It's time to get out the pruning shears, the fertiliser and the watering cans. Open your Bibles, receive the Sacraments, pray, live and talk about your faith. If you want some help or guidance talk with me or Fr Jack or Mother Katie, sign up to Tea and Chat, think about joining Fr Jack's Faith Matters group in the autumn.

Lord of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of thy name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.