

# SUNDAY PLUS

Be fruitful

## Spiritual fruits



by Paul Higginson

Eating five portions of fruit and vegetables each day is supposed to improve our physical health. Jesus often refers to seeds and crops in the Gospel and there are thirty-two references to fruit in the New Testament! Today Jesus tells us that our spiritual health depends on us being "fruitful". Like

the seed that dies, we too must first die to self-centredness, indifference to others, pride, greed, etc. Once we have died to sin we are then able to bear much fruit. Elsewhere Jesus says, "You will know them by their fruits." In other words you can tell if someone is a follower of Christ by looking at what they do. This highlights an important truth – religion is not primarily about what

you believe, it is about what you do. It is no good having a wonderful set of theological principles in our heads, if our hearts are made of stone and if our beliefs do not bear fruit in our daily actions.

By telling us to "lose our life", Jesus invites us today to stop worshipping at the altar of worldly riches, fame and status. This is the real challenge for us in today's Gospel. What things

do we need to lose or leave behind? What needs to wither and die so that we can grow the fruits of love, peace, joy and hope that Jesus promises to those who take up their cross and follow him?

*Paul Higginson is the Assistant Editor at the Catholic Sixth Form Centre in Harrow and has been a parish priest for thirty years.*

## In the hands of God

by Elaine Abraham

Farmers and other custodians of the land have a very important job to do in feeding the nation. Farming is more a vocation than just a job, handed down through families, down through the ages, passing on invaluable knowledge, from grandfathers, to fathers, to sons and also to grandmothers, mothers and daughters.

The sowing of seeds, which is so dependent on Mother Nature, weather conditions and preparation of the soil, needs to have someone with a positive faith in God. Farming has always been physically hard, but so rewarding in a good year and devastating in a bad year, having long-term effects. Farming is also mentally challenging: making the correct decision, how and when to prepare the soil and when to drill the seeds. Are the conditions right?

Which seeds should be sown? Once they are sown, they need enough moisture to germinate and grow. Then the seedlings have to be protected from predators in many forms: moulds, insects, rabbits, deer, stray livestock possibly, and birds. The outcome of the harvest, six to ten months later, means food for many – or not. It is in the hands of God.

*Elaine Abraham, a member of the Customer Care Team of Redemptorist Publications, has lived on farms for all of her life.*



**Living Lord, let my life be a reflection of yours: living, loving and beautiful. Amen.**

## A seed of loveliness

by Christine Clark

At this time of the year I am busy in the garden, preparing for the coming season. I sow seeds and take cuttings, in the hope that I'll have the tastiest vegetables and the prettiest flowers. Yet I am always doubtful of the ability of seeds to grow into healthy plants and beautiful blooms. They look so lifeless and it takes faith to put them into soil, water them, give them good growing conditions and hope for the best. Even then, some will thrive, while some, for no apparent reason, will not germinate or are weak.

Seeds are very like babies. They come in all shapes and sizes and can sometimes look pretty low in potential. Yet we tend our gardens as we would nurture our children. We try to give them a good start in life, with the best conditions, the right sustenance and regular care – with the result that both plants and children can yield great

beauty and goodness, give glory to God. Greatness can come in the most unexpected and unlikely of packages.

*Christine Clark is a member of the editorial staff of Redemptorist Publications.*

**“Your life is like a grain of wheat. You do everything possible so that the kingdom may come, grow and be great, and also so that you may shelter many people, like the mustard tree. Tell about this. Small life, small gesture, normal life with a mission in heaven, a grain that produces growth.”**

Pop

Today:

Jeremiah 31:31-34  
Hebrews 5:7-9  
John 12:20-33

Monday:

2 Samuel 7:4-5, 12-14, 16  
Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22  
Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24 or  
Luke 2:41-51

Tuesday:

Numbers 21:4-9  
John 8:21-30

Wednesday:

Daniel 3:14-20, 24-25, 28  
John 8:31-42

Thursday:

Genesis 17:3-9  
John 8:51-59

Friday:

Jeremiah 20:10-13  
John 10:31-42

Saturday:

Ezekiel 37:21-28  
John 11:45-56

Next Sunday:

Procession  
or John 12  
Mass: Isaiah  
Philippian  
Mark 14:1