A Wonderful Celebration of 70 Years!

There was much to celebrate at St Gregory's Church Hall on Sunday afternoon, 18 October 2026, as more than 150 people from four parishes and five churches gathered to celebrate the 70th birthday of Fr Anthony Paris, together with three other parishioners celebrating their 70th birthdays this year: Trish Noble, Greg Wall and Marie-Therese Tierman. There were others as well, who were unable to attend.

The gathering began at 12.30pm, ready for a 1pm start, and we were also delighted to welcome Fr Joseph, Fr George, and Fr Thomas to join in the celebrations as well as the four deanery deacons, the two John's & Steve, and Terry from Warminster.

When Fr Anthony and the other birthday celebrants arrived at 1pm, they were each warmly welcomed with a celebratory toast. This was followed by parishioner and piper, Bobbie Mackie accompanying us on the bagpipes as everyone joined together to sing *Happy Birthday*— a truly memorable way to begin the party! One of the most touching moments came when the children presented Fr Anthony with a beautiful book of memories. It included a reminder of his special message to the children when they are invited to join him on the sanctuary and pray the *Our Father*: as they join hands and form a circle around the altar, he reminds them that **a circle has no beginning and no end** — a lovely symbol of our unity and of God's never-ending love.

Fr. Anthony was then entrusted with making the first cut of his birthday cake, homemade and delicious and with a pointer towards his previous military chaplain role, even an iced version of a plane that Fr. Anthony used to fly.

And then there was the food! Parishioners had generously brought along an amazing variety of dishes, with something to tempt everyone, including a buffet of rice, pasta, quiche, savouries and hot curry, chicken, and rices as well as a wonderful selection of cakes and puddings. There was certainly no shortage of choice, and the food was enjoyed by all.

A great time was had by everyone, and Fr Anthony was very grateful and visibly moved by the warmth, affection and appreciation shown to him by his parishioners. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate not only his 70 years, but also his ministry and the many relationships he has built within our parish communities.

The celebrations drew to a close at around 4pm, when Fr Anthony and the septuagenarian guests were piped out of the hall by Bobbie Mackie. In true parish spirit, many parishioners stayed behind to help clear up and ensure the hall was left clean and tidy.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed food, helped organise the event, welcomed our guests, served and cleared up, and helped make the afternoon such a success. Special thanks also go to Michel Illas and Greg Wall for capturing the occasion so beautifully through their photography.

It was a joyful afternoon filled with friendship, laughter, good food and gratitude — a fitting celebration of Fr Anthony and all those marking this special milestone. Happy 70th birthday to you all.