

# St John the Evangelist, Poulton

6<sup>th</sup> May 2021

*Fifth Thursday of Easter*

*Fifty-eighth Thursday of Isolation*

Telephone: 01253 893184

Sign on at: [saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com](mailto:saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com)

Parish Website: [www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk](http://www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk)



*Remember, we believe that we are saved  
in the same way as they are:  
through the grace of the Lord Jesus.'*

## **Mass during the week:**

Saturday –	6.00pm	St John's
Tuesday -	9.30am	St John's
Wednesday -	9.30am	St Martin's
Thursday -	9.30am	St John's
Friday –	9.30am	St John's
Saturday –	6.00pm	St John's

(Daily Scripture is available from [www.universalis.com](http://www.universalis.com))

## **Acts 15:7-21**

*(The apostles and elders met to look into the matter.....)*

*After the discussion had gone on a long time, Peter stood up and addressed the apostles and the elders.*

*'My brothers,' he said 'you know perfectly well that in the early days God made his choice among you: the pagans were to learn the Good News from me and so become believers. In fact God, who can read everyone's heart, showed his approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he had to us. God made no distinction between them and us, since he purified their hearts by faith. It would only provoke God's anger now, surely, if you imposed on the disciples the very burden that neither we nor our ancestors were strong enough to support? Remember, we believe that we are saved in the same way as they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus.'*

*This silenced the entire assembly, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul describing the signs and wonders God had worked through them among the pagans.*

*When they had finished it was James who spoke. 'My brothers,' he said 'listen to me. Simeon has described how God first arranged to enlist a people for his name out of the pagans. This is entirely in harmony with the words of the prophets, since the scriptures say:*

*After that I shall return  
and rebuild the fallen House of David;  
I shall rebuild it from its ruins  
and restore it.  
Then the rest of mankind,  
all the pagans who are consecrated to my name,  
will look for the Lord,  
says the Lord who made this known so long ago.*

*'I rule, then, that instead of making things more difficult for pagans who turn to God, we send them a letter telling them merely to abstain from anything polluted by idols, from fornication, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For Moses has always had his preachers in every town, and is read aloud in the synagogues every sabbath.'*

## **John 15:9-11**

*Jesus said to his disciples:*

*'As the Father has loved me,  
so I have loved you.  
Remain in my love.  
If you keep my commandments  
you will remain in my love,  
just as I have kept my Father's commandments  
and remain in his love.  
I have told you this  
so that my own joy may be in you  
and your joy be complete.'*

(What is God saying to you as you hear his Word here?)

Sometimes we forget that the method with which we deal with a contentious issue is usually as important – if not more important – than the finding of a solution. We see this in this first serious argument within the early Church. But keep in mind as we read that, even today, we have contentious issues and we must be ready to treat these in a way which helps us be open to the Holy Spirit rather than allow individuals to respond with simply: ‘I don’t like that!’ This last couple of weeks in the Acts of the Apostles we have been warned about the danger of individuals arriving at a comfortable picture of faith which prevents them from being open to how God invites us to work with him. The disciples’ response to this serious issue, ‘do gentiles have to become Jews before becoming followers of Jesus’, is not only to do with the decision they made, but also leads us on to a method of discussion which continues in the official Church to his day – but, even today, it may not be used by people who start and end with: ‘I don’t like that’.

And so dealing with this issue reminds us of the method Jesus used with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: they shared their experience and concerns with each other before the Lord. We are told that :

*“the discussion had gone on a long time”!*

+ Now Peter stands and speaks (further down he is called ‘Simeon’, the Semitic version of his original name – there are ‘locals’ listening!). The place of ‘Peter’ in the Church (or we might say ‘the Pope’) is not to magically come up with the answer from God – or from any other place. Peter, and his successor, is to hold the Church together in unity and remind them (us) of some important and traditional realities in the Church. He ensures that the discussion is rooted in the origins of the life of Christ and reflects the life of the Church – he wishes to avoid an understanding that ‘tradition’ as simply what people remember, or the memory of the present day (Three generations?).

In this short message from Peter he reminds us that God chose them, that it was Good News for all people, that the Holy Spirit is involved, that we cannot risk abusing power by imposing burdens on others, and that we are saved only by God’s free grace and not our own actions:

*Remember, we believe that we are saved in the same way as they are:  
through the grace of the Lord Jesus.’*

+ Now we have to hear the realities being brought to the room by the people who have experience: Paul and Barnabas speak and describe how God had worked wonders through them! (We do not hear this – probably because we heard it earlier.) At this ultra-high ranking gathering of elders of the Church in Jerusalem there is an interesting insistence on hearing from the Church on the ground!

+ James, ‘the brother of the Lord’ and the leading member in the host Church of Jerusalem, (We might now say ‘Bishop’) is keen to calm the Pharisee converts who were probably the most ‘anti’ this issue. He speaks as someone known to them, but also nodding to Peter’s authority to guide the Church by Jesus’ command.

+ After discussion, guidance and a local confirmation James finally puts the ‘tin hat’ on the issue by quoting scripture. It is very difficult, now, for anyone to claim prejudice against Pagan Gentiles who wished to come to Jesus.

+ You get the impression that there was a silence – a chance for dissenters to speak.....

+ It is now left to the local Church leader (Not Peter notice, because all members of the Church, not just Peter, are part of the Body of Christ) to suggest a way forward for the Gentile Christians Paul and Barnabas were working with. James adds a very helpful message which we need to remember at times of disagreement:

*“that instead of **making things more difficult for pagans who turn to God**”.....*

They make it easier to welcome them!

Notice that the mention of avoiding anything polluted by Idols and the blood of strangled animals is about how anything associated with these could be seen by on-lookers as worshipping false Gods! There was nothing wrong with eating it (It was often sold cheaply at local markets!) – but how others would see it.

We continue tomorrow – how will the Gentile Christians receive this news?

THURSDAY, MAY 6, 2021

***“The practice of meditation has received a great deal of attention in recent years. It is not only Christians who talk about it: the practice of meditation exists in almost all the world’s religions... We all need to meditate, to reflect, to discover ourselves, it is a human dynamic... Here, then, is the image of young people and adults sitting in recollection, in silence, with eyes half closed... It is a phenomenon to be looked on favourably. Indeed, we are not made for rushing all the time, we have an inner life that cannot always be trampled on. Meditating is therefore a need for everyone. Meditating, so to speak, is like stopping and taking a breath in life.”***

Pope Francis

GENERAL AUDIENCE APRIL 28, 2021

## **PARISH NOTICES:**

### **COVID 19 Security - When you come to Mass:**

***Now that we have been allowed to move from private prayer to being able to celebrate Mass together please remember to do so safely. We have been asked to ensure Government and Church rules which might seem intrusive but they are designed to remind us to be careful and, above all, to keep distances. Please help us with this by being careful.***

- ✓ Government guidelines demand that all the congregation (except those with exemption certificates) wear mouth and nose masks in church
- ✓ Please maintain a 2m distance as you approach and enter church and be guided by the stewards.
- ✓ Please note there is a 'one way' system – entering church by the left hand door.
- ✓ Please sanitise your hands as you enter church
- ✓ You will be invited to leave your name and contact detail for 'Track & Tracing' in case of need.
- ✓ If you wish to wear a face mask you may do this – but please bring your own.
- ✓ To minimise movement in church Stewards will direct you to fill the benches from the front. You will probably not be able to go in your 'usual' bench but that will give you a new perspective!
- ✓ Please remove your mask just before approaching for Holy Communion and then replace afterwards.
- ✓ You will receive instructions for coming forward for Holy Communion. But please respect distancing (don't bunch), move for Communion using the one-way system, please stretch out your arms fully as you request Holy Communion, you will not be invited to speak "Amen" before receiving Holy Communion. These will need to be kept in mind at first and we do need to remember they, though not the best liturgy, are about distancing and staying well.
- ✓ Holy Communion must be received only on the hand. (No gloves, please)
- ✓ Please sanitise your hands as you leave church by the other door than the one you entered.
- ✓ As you leave church please move away from the door and remember to distance yourselves if you speak to other people.
- ✓ There is a basket at the back of church for your offertory donations – thank you.
- ✓ There are weekly bulletins at the back of church with other information.
- ✓ Please do greet other people outside church – but remember to distance yourself and do not meet in groups that are obviously more than six.

Thanks to our small, but keen, band of stewards, without whom we could not open our church. Please speak to them if you would like to help with this.

- **Know any parishioners housebound or who may need contacting?** - At the start of this lockdown a number of parishioners offered to find a way of being help to those parishioners who are in need or just housebound. Many people are in contact with the parish through this email or the WhatsApp group, but you may think of some who are not getting parish contacts – but they may get family support and food. If you have suggestions please email their names and addresses to the parish address and we can get parishioners to drop a message in to them. Thanks.
- **Fleetwood Food Bank:** If you know of anyone you think has need of a parcel of food from the Food Bank please telephone 01253 774313 – they will need an address to have it delivered to.
- **Local COVID19 Helplines** *(Official message from our Parish Organisers)*  
The Wyre Council have a dedicated helpline for COVID19 isolation support. If you are struggling to get essential items, or need help, please ring 01253 891000 and select OPTION 7 when prompted. Alternatively, if you have access to the internet, you can fill in the online request for help here: [www.wyre.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.wyre.gov.uk/coronavirus). There is also another local network being organised by the Methodist Church - called POULTONCAN. The helpline there is 01253 670800 between 8am and 10pm, 7 days a week.

We have a group of parish volunteers who are going to be working with the council to respond to requests. If anyone would like to offer help, please email Jenny at [jennifer.hillman.sutcliffe@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer.hillman.sutcliffe@gmail.com) or telephone on 07568502749.

- **Parish WhatsApp Group:** Emily Halliwell (as part of the above group) has set up a closed parish WhatsApp account. I have finally been beaten into joining but am a bit of a WhatsApp virgin as yet! Emily says: "My number is 07969643648 if you want to be added just reply with your mobile number or text me. "

### **Thoughts contributed by Virus Times readers:**

(A few responses from these Virus Times Reflections from our parishioners: Thanks to contributors.)

#### **Sunday:**

Thank you.

I like the idea that, once Paul had gone, the churches heaved a sigh of relief that they were now left in peace!

And I suppose, in a way, the bishops are leaving us in peace - but that's not exactly their job description, is it? (What is their job description)

We have had a few deaths at English Martyrs' recently. Ken Binks, who died yesterday could very well have been nicknamed Barnabas as, in spite of advanced age, he made every effort to encourage and support wherever and whenever he could. Many of us are quite confident that, if at all possible, he will be there to give us a helping hand into Heaven, when the time comes.

#### **Wednesday:**

Read recently: "An American preacher, Eugene Walsh, once finished off his sermon with the remarkable words, "Jesus only promised two things: Your life has meaning and you're going to live forever. If you get a better offer, take it!"

#### **Sunday:**

So much to ponder! We refer to family as "our own flesh and blood" and so they are. They have our genes, we have given them life, we have shared our lives with them and we hope our values. You may also remember the TV programme entitled "You are what you eat".

St Augustine commenting on John Ch. 6 writes: "***If you receive the Eucharist well, you are what you eat. Since you are the Body of Christ and his members, it is your mystery which you receive. As you come to communion, you hear the words 'The Body of Christ' and you answer 'Amen'. Be, therefore, members of Christ that your 'Amen' may be true. Be what you see. Receive what you already are.***"

For the first thousand years of the Church, the baptised were called the True Body and the consecrated bread and wine was called the Mystical Body. How did this become flipped? As you write: The 'off top of the head' answer goes nowhere near the whole answer.

### **People being prayed for by our parish groups:**

Len Rawcliffe RIP	Len's Requiem Mass will be at St John's on 14 <sup>th</sup> May. <i>COVID restriction: For an invitation please speak to the family.</i>
Peter Brownwood	Who is worried about his health – but progressing well.
From Jayne Clark	Could I please ask that our parishioners pray for all the staff in children's social care who are still working to safeguard children in our area and around the country. It never ceases to amaze me how hard they work generally, despite the abuse that they often are subjected to, but more so currently given the extra risk that they are putting themselves under to visit the vulnerable.

**'Thank You, God'** - Do we have any news to thank God for - as well as other people we are praying for?

<b>Our School Staff</b>	
<b>Clare and Pete Cobb's glorious music</b>	<i>they have sung us through Covid; it's been a joy – and still is!</i>
<b>For all our Faith-filled Parishioners with whom we share our weekday Masses.</b>	<i>It's so supportive to be in the presence of others.</i>
<b>To scientists working on a COVID help</b>	<i>Well done for breakthroughs</i>