

# St John the Evangelist, Poulton

6<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## Sixth Sunday of Easter

### Fifty-ninth Sunday of Isolation

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*You did not choose me:  
no, I chose you;  
and I commissioned you  
to go out and to bear fruit,  
fruit that will last;*

#### **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 10:25-26,34-35,44-48**

As Peter reached the house Cornelius went out to meet him, knelt at his feet and prostrated himself. But Peter helped him up. 'Stand up,' he said 'I am only a man after all!'

Then Peter addressed them: 'The truth I have now come to realise' he said 'is that God does not have favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him.'

While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners. Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on the pagans too, since they could hear them speaking strange languages and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said, 'Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit just as much as we have?' He then gave orders for them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterwards they begged him to stay on for some days.

#### **John 15:9-17**

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.  
This is my commandment:  
love one another, as I have loved you.  
A man can have no greater love  
than to lay down his life for his friends.  
You are my friends,  
if you do what I command you.  
I shall not call you servants any more,  
because a servant does not know  
his master's business;  
I call you friends,  
because I have made known to you  
everything I have learnt from my Father.  
You did not choose me:  
no, I chose you;  
and I commissioned you  
to go out and to bear fruit,  
fruit that will last;  
and then the Father will give you  
anything you ask him in my name.  
What I command you  
is to love one another.'

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

As we enter the sixth week of our celebration of the mystery of Easter it is useful to remind ourselves that we are approaching two important elements in the reality of Easter: 'The Ascension of the Lord' this coming Thursday in our calendar; and 'Pentecost' on the Sunday after next in our calendar.

It is important that we see these two realities as, not distinct events in the life of Jesus and his disciples, but part of the same mystery and event. You may well have noticed that these events get very confused with each other in the Easter scriptures. Separating them out helps us to appreciate the difficulties the early disciples had in moving from the crucifixion to taking on Jesus' mission which he had spoken about – it also, of course, helps us to face the different aspects of our development in taking up the same task in Jesus' name.

The question we must ponder, for our own sake, is 'how did these men and women manage to move from the burial of their friend to the point where they were prepared, and energised, to preach – and, some, to die for it?' We could ask ourselves how we develop in our own lives, beliefs and practical skills?

Imagine how the disciples had been set alight by Jesus and his teaching on life and then been shocked when he continually seemed to demand that they had to do this exact same teaching themselves. But they spend time, on that Sabbath 'do nothing day' after the burial of Jesus, fearing how that command will continue now that he is gone – after all they could not do it alone, could they? What we see now is the disciples group-experience of how Jesus gave them, firstly the fact that he was still with them, but also that they eventually have the ability to do what he did. The acts of the Apostles we have been reading since Easter is witness to their confidence – but this is after the Pentecost event and perception to the group of disciples.

Imagine your own experiences in life of how you come to 'confidence'. You may have decided on a job but you still needed to train for it. Even when you started to rely on the closeness of someone who 'knows better'. There comes a time, and you may well be able to remember exactly when this was, when you have to make a decision completely on your own – but you know it's right! That procedure is true for many areas in life which you can speak to others about – especially if you are married and have never 'run back to mother'!

The next two weeks are not only about a theological discovery of what happened to Jesus after his burial. They are about how the disciples learned to move through their grief to knowing that Jesus was with them and that they were living in his Spirit. They had become 'Church'.

Now we come to the real reason to celebrate this mystery – that it reminds us that we, too, have been charged with taking on the teaching and actions of Jesus in our own time. We are no less the Church in our day than those women and men were in their day. How good it is to see that they had the same worries as we might have in approaching this mission as we have – and the Good News is that the gift to them of the presence of Jesus and the offer to live in the Spirit is open to us. What we will read in the next two weeks is written by the first people to experience this change – and they wrote it so that we would be able to share it.

This doesn't make it 'dead easy', though. Even in today's first reading the disciples were still:

*"all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on the pagans too"*

In the Gospel today we hear Jesus changing his tone to a gentle encouragement as he was preparing his friends to be ready to see the reality of what was going to happen – and what he had been training them for:

*I shall not call you servants any more,  
because a servant does not know  
his master's business;  
I call you friends,  
because I have made known to you  
everything I have learnt from my Father.*

Many Christians think Jesus' commandment is to 'treat others as you would want them to treat you'. This is Old Testament teaching. In the Gospel today Jesus reminds his friends, including us, that his teaching is much stronger – and if we are to understand what is going to happen to him they will have to put on his 'spectacles' for life. He says:

*"This is my commandment:  
love one another, as I have loved you."*

Like the disciples we have enjoyed the resurrection time. With them we will now experience the full meaning of the Easter mystery and be ready for the rush of life and energy it should bring.

SUNDAY, MAY 9, 2021

*"If an experience of prayer gives us inner peace, or self-mastery, or clarity about the path to take, these results are, so to speak, side effects of the grace of Christian prayer, which is the encounter with Jesus. That is, meditating means going to the encounter with Jesus, guided by a phrase or a word from Holy Scripture."*

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.)

**Wednesday:** "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"

Sometimes we may feel that the power of the Spirit found in the early church has somehow faded. Yet in our own lifetime we have witnessed an astonishing intervention of the Holy Spirit that is as equally life changing for the church. Pope John XXIII prayed in 1962 for a New Pentecost. Vatican II was the result. It dealt with very contentious issues as some very conservative Cardinals and Curia, based in Rome, sought to impose its will on the rest of the Church. John XXIII, listening to wise, pastoral voices that were open to the Spirit and in contact with the realities of people's lives, rejected the legalistic and dead approach advocated by powerful voices in Rome and set the church in a new direction equally as profound as that brought about by the first council in Jerusalem. All God's people are invited by this Council to live *Life in the Spirit* to the full. What does this mean?

**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>