

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

17th June 2021

Thursday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

Sixty-fourth Thursday of Isolation

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*"I am afraid that in the same way
your ideas may get corrupted
and turned away from
simple devotion to Christ."*

Mass during the week:

Saturday – 11 th Sunday of Year	6.00pm	St John's
Tuesday -	9.30am	– Mass at St John's
Wednesday -	9.30am	– Mass at St Martin's
Thursday -	9.30am	– Mass at St John's
Friday –	9.30am	– Mass at St John's
Saturday – 12 th Sunday of Year	6.00pm	St John's

(Daily Scripture is available from www.universalis.com)

2 Corinthians 11:1-11

I only wish you were able to tolerate a little foolishness from me. But of course: you are tolerant towards me. You see, the jealousy that I feel for you is God's own jealousy: I arranged for you to marry Christ so that I might give you away as a chaste virgin to this one husband. But the serpent, with his cunning, seduced Eve, and I am afraid that in the same way your ideas may get corrupted and turned away from simple devotion to Christ. Because any new-comer has only to proclaim a new Jesus, different from the one that we preached, or you have only to receive a new spirit, different from the one you have already received, or a new gospel, different from the one you have already accepted – and you welcome it with open arms. As far as I can tell, these arch-apostles have nothing more than I have. I may not be a polished speechmaker, but as for knowledge, that is a different matter; surely we have made this plain, speaking on every subject in front of all of you.

Or was I wrong, lowering myself so as to lift you high, by preaching the gospel of God to you and taking no fee for it? I was robbing other churches, living on them so that I could serve you. When I was with you and ran out of money, I was no burden to anyone; the brothers who came from Macedonia provided me with everything I wanted. I was very careful, and I always shall be, not to be a burden to you in any way, and by Christ's truth in me, this cause of boasting will never be taken from me in the regions of Achaia. Would I do that if I did not love you? God knows I do.

Matthew 6:7-15

Jesus said to his disciples: 'In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him. So you should pray like this:

*'Our Father in heaven,
may your name be held holy,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.*

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.

*And do not put us to the test,
but save us from the evil one.*

'Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.'

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

It will not have passed your attention in the last couple of years, or couple of days, that our modern politicians seem quite happy to make their voices heard not only loudly, but in ways that their ideas will not be forgotten by history!

This has not always been true and today, in his second letter to the Church in Corinth, Paul is not happy about the way he is being spoken of and what he is being accused of. However, Paul is not prepared to accuse all in a letter which we might be reading out in church two thousand years later – and we are! Something is up! The good news is that we are not quite sure exactly what. The other good news is that Paul reminds his people, and us today, what our faith is about even though there may be others who can speak more eloquently than he!

We don't need to travel very far through the history of our Church to notice how easily leaders and members can be drawn into understandings which place church power, wealth, politics, crusades, persecution, personal spiritual ideas before Jesus. In recent years we have seen the Church tend to defend itself before the innocent – lets hope we are learning.

Something was happening in Corinth where those whom Paul calls 'Super-Apostles' or 'Arch Apostles' were undermining his teaching about Jesus. If you read the passage again we find he is not doubting others can preach more clearly than he etc, but he is evidently concerned that they are not putting Jesus at the centre of their teaching. How easily we have seen this happen throughout the Church's history – we can find the institution of the Church can become more important to some than the person of Jesus!

Paul makes his main concern clear when he warns:

"I am afraid that in the same way your ideas may get corrupted and turned away from simple devotion to Christ."

Paul is keen to continue to return to the importance that if Christ is not at the centre of our faith, our Church, we are in danger!

As well as various historical difficulties our Church has undoubtedly gone through we have had many great opportunities to return to 'Christ at the centre'.

In the lifetime of many of us (Though we will have been young!) we have had the call by Pope John XXIII to 'open the windows of the Church to the Spirit' in the Second Vatican Council. This event, calling the Spirit of God, opened the eyes of many to the centrality of Jesus in the work of the Church – though some found this difficult.

In 1980 a great National Catholic gathering happened in Liverpool to which parishes were encouraged to be represented – the 'National Pastoral Congress'. Building on the international Ecumenical Council it allowed Catholics to place Jesus at the centre of their faith and ministry and look at where God was leading them.

Around the Millennium in our own Diocese we worked together with parishes in a renewal named 'A New Start with Jesus'. I hope many will remember this and the events which surrounded it. It is clear that 'making Jesus the centre of our faith' was the single most important outcome – and for many of us it was (Some, it must be said, thought the title was 'a bit too evangelical'!?!?)

(It would be interesting for us all to revisit our memories of these events so that we remember what we learned from what surrounded them)

Pope Francis is concerned that we have had a great deal of vision about how the Church should have Jesus at its centre – like St Paul today. But he is keen to find ways of actively moving forward; practical methods to ensure we listen to God together and not drift into ways of being Church which do not have Jesus at the centre.

You may have noticed that Francis speaks of 'Synodality' - not the easiest of words, but which means 'walking together'. He is inviting us to find practical ways of ensuring the whole church is 'walking together' – Cardinals, clergy, lay people, religious – all people! Think of the Gospel story of the Road to Emmaus and we find people 'walking together' with Jesus by their side. This is not a new idea, of course, and it is an accepted image of the Church as 'The Pilgrim People of God' – but Francis is looking for practical ways of acting this out which draws us to 'walk together'.

I have attached a couple of articles about this development which we will hear more of through Pope Francis and our bishops soon. At least you can't say you hadn't heard of it – from Saint Paul, actually!

THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 2021

“It is crucial that we grow in our awareness of the needs of the poor, which are always changing, as are their living conditions. Today, in fact, in the more economically developed areas of the world, people are less willing than in the past to confront poverty. The state of relative affluence to which we have become accustomed makes it more difficult to accept sacrifices and deprivation... We need to be open to reading the signs of the times that ask us to find new ways of being evangelizers in the contemporary world.”

Pope Francis

MESSAGE FOR THE FIFTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

PARISH NOTICES:

21st June COVID Changes:

the only real liturgical change is that wedding ceremonies can go beyond the 30 cap to match the present daily Mass and funeral limit based on social distancing. I presume there will be no further loosening until 19th July.

17th May Changes in Church service COVID Safety:

Mass: Not much change unless you miss bidding prayers and offertory processions – I think we will leave Mass as it is and see what the June day brings! (I hope the stewards can provide for us until then – their welcome ministry is great!)

Funerals: The number at funerals increases to the Guide number set by the size of the individual church (If you hear people speaking of this please let them know that the rule is NOT: ‘you can have as many as you want!’) Practically, here, I will demand that people get permission from the family (who I will speak to before as usual) otherwise we could have too many people arriving to be safe!

Baptisms: Have legal limit now of 30 people – one Baptism at a time and not within Mass. Please invite families to contact me if they wish to arrange a baptism date. Now that we can have 6 people in the house we can also provide Baptism preparation for parents again.

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. 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 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.)

- Thursday: Funny you should mention mantillas - I found mine the other day, when turning a drawer out. I always carried it in my bag, just in case. I would offer to wear it as a demonstration, but couldn't cope with it along with a mask and hearing aids!
- Saturday: Thanks for guiding us so well through this Easter period and particularly for concentrating on the significance of the Act of the Apostles. We are praying in this period for a renewal of our understanding of the work and action of the Holy Spirit, as did Pope John XXIII when he called for the Council. It occurs to me today to ask: "In the light of our scripture reading during this period and in the light of the call of John XIII for a "new Pentecost", what would a Spirit filled parish look like today? Perhaps we might write down a list of what we would expect to see in the life and practice of such a parish and ponder how it would be a witness to our joyous and strong belief in the Resurrection of the Lord?" I for one am going to start that task and see where it leads me.
- Dangerous and exciting territory!

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Maureen Brown is in hospital	Please keep her in your prayers, thanks.
Paul Bradley RIP	<p>Who died last Friday. Paul's Requiem Mass will be at St John's on Friday 18th June at 12.00 (Entrance by invitation of the family) and the burial in our cemetery.</p> <p>The Service will be Streamed: <i>"The stream will appear on Channel 1 of our website here: https://briandavidfilms.co.uk/channel1</i> <i>As you know all our streams are password protected and the password for this stream will be 2935.</i> <i>Please share this link and password with your client ahead of the day, but can you please remind them the password will not work until just before the start of the service.</i> <i>The recording will appear on our Recordings Page within 24 hours, and will be available to watch, share and download for up to 30 days."</i></p>
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?

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

As we seem to be moving out of lockdown, are there some things we have learned and must not forget?

How we missed people, our loved ones and their touch	
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THE TABLET

THE INTERNATIONAL
CATHOLIC WEEKLY
FOUNDED IN 1840

THE PEOPLE
OF GOD

STEP UP TO THE SYNOD

So far there have been few signs that the leaders of the Catholic Church in Britain are ready to grasp the nettle labelled "synodality", even though it is clear that that is the direction in which Pope Francis wants to drive them. Now he is piling on the pressure and they have no choice but to respond. Given that in recent decades the Catholic Church in England and Wales has been a fairly placid institution, even with the scandals surrounding child abuse by clergy, it is not surprising that the bishops would prefer to maintain the status quo. By and large they manage the institution that has been handed on to them as best they can, until it is time to pass it on to their successors. Or, to put it another way, it is not going anywhere fast.

The bishops' fundamental difficulty is the relationship they have with their own laity. Pope Francis has decreed that later this year in every diocese, bishop, priests and people must dialogue together in preparation for wider consultations, leading up to an international synod in Rome in October 2023 – on the subject of synodality itself. This time, the synod will not be just bishops talking to each other. Lay voices will be given due weight. The big issue that Francis has laid before the Church is how it can become in reality what it currently is only – for the most part – in theory: the People of God. To hear the voice of the Holy Spirit in all its creativity, the Church needs to listen with all its ears, not just those beneath episcopal mitres. And not just the ears of men. And that is where the answer to the question – where should it be going? – is to be found.

This synodal process is the theology of the Second Vatican Council spelt out. The best reason for not doing it – that it will be messy – is also the best reason for doing it. There are a number of controversies that have not had space to erupt in the past, but could now do so. These are the issues that tend to dominate the Letters pages of *The Tablet*, concerning child abuse, women, homosexuality, liturgy, social justice, racism and so on. Most bishops would prefer they would go away. In most instances there is tension between what the official Church has had to say, sometimes several generations ago, and where modern Catholics feel the truth must lie.

It is now more than 40 years since the last genuinely synodical exercise in the Catholic Church in England and Wales took place, the 1980 National Pastoral Congress in Liverpool. It did not avoid difficult questions, such as contraception and divorce, but it was well handled and did not cause disunity. It was a sincere search for the *sensus fidei*, and the great majority of bishops – as well as the great majority of priests and laypeople – seemed satisfied that it had been found. It did not, however, produce structural changes that would have made synodality a permanent feature of the life of the Church. What it did demonstrate is that the bishops really have nothing to fear from the laity, and that the laity were and are an extraordinary – and extraordinarily neglected – resource. One of the bishops said afterwards he felt he had met the Catholic laity for the first time – and added: "Wow!" That is the spirit waiting to be captured again.

Pope Francis speaking on Pentecost Sunday 2021

The Spirit also tells us, "Look to the whole". The whole, not the part. The Spirit does not mould isolated individuals, but shapes us into a Church in the wide variety of our charisms, into a unity that is never uniformity. The Paraclete affirms the primacy of the whole. There, in the whole, in the community, the Spirit prefers to work and to bring newness. Let us look at the apostles. They were all quite different. They included, for example, Matthew, a tax collector who collaborated with the Romans, and Simon called the zealot, who fought them. They had contrary political ideas, different visions of the world. Yet once they received the Spirit, they learned to give primacy not to their human viewpoints but to the "whole" that is God's plan. Today, if we listen to the Spirit, we will not be concerned with conservatives and progressives, traditionalists and innovators, right and left. When those become our criteria, then the Church has forgotten the Spirit. The Paraclete impels us to unity, to concord, to the harmony of diversity. He makes us see ourselves as parts of the same body, brothers and sisters of one another. Let us look to the whole! The enemy wants diversity to become opposition and so he makes them become ideologies. Say no to ideologies, yes to the whole.

In what is potentially the boldest move since the second Vatican Council, Pope Francis has announced a two-year-long, Church-wide process of consultation and discernment / **BY CHRISTOPHER LAMB**

Synodality takes flight

THE NEWS came just before the celebration of Pentecost. In what seemed to some a similar unleashing of the Spirit, Pope Francis approved a dramatic shakeup to the next synod of bishops. For the first time, ordinary Catholics from across the world will be formally included at every stage of the process.

Rather than just a three-week, one-off gathering of bishops in Rome in October 2022, the synod will begin later this year at the local level, with every diocese in the universal Church embarking on a structured discernment as the People of God, and will conclude two years later. This marks a watershed in the Pope's search for a more synodal Church, in which people, priests and bishops "walk together" in mission, echoing the disciples walking with Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

This is easier to talk about than to put into practice. The latest changes mark the boldest reform move in the post-pandemic phase of Francis' papacy. If they come off, they will embed into the structures and habits of the Church a process of renewal that will outlive his pontificate.

CRUCIALLY, THESE reforms are not only Francis' ideas. "The Pope is hitting the re-set button," Professor Myriam Wijlens, a Dutch theologian and canon lawyer teaching at the University of Erfurt in Germany, tells me. "When we reset our computer nothing is added but it is set to work optimally. Francis is not adding anything new. He is more deeply implementing the Second Vatican Council."

It had already been announced that the theme of the next synod would be "For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission". What is the nature of the Church and how should it witness to the Gospel in the third millennium? The pandemic has upended traditional pastoral models, and digital and technological upheavals have created opportunities for the Church to be more agile and creative. To meet the challenge, the synod process will be "carried out through listening to all of the baptised". What the synod is looking for is the *sensus fidei*. The Pope speaks of the Church as an "inverted pyramid", with "the top located beneath the base".

The Pope will formally open the synod on 9-10 October in the Vatican, and a week later each diocese will do the same with a celebration of the Eucharist in an "opening session".



Professor Myriam Wijlens with Pope Francis

Previous synods in the Francis pontificate have sought to consult the faithful – often through questionnaires – but never before has the local church been a constitutive part of the synod. Every diocese must establish a contact person or team and hold a "pre-synodal meeting" at the end of their discernment; their findings will then be sent to bishops' conferences, who must conduct their own reflections. The "diocesan phase" from October 2021 to April 2022 will form the basis for a "continental phase" from September 2022 to March 2023, and the process will conclude with a "universal church phase" in Rome in October 2023.

THE BIGGEST difficulty facing Francis will come from a mixture of resistance, inertia, fear and uncertainty. For decades, bishops have been expected to take their instructions from Rome. Most are careful to avoid anything that might incur a ticking-off from "head office". Now the local church is being told to find its own voice. It is a culture change that not every bishop is likely to be comfortable with.

Some of their hesitancy comes from the fear that synods provoke tensions, disagreements and difficulties. They can be messy. "Autocracy was always quicker and cleaner," Archbishop Mark Coleridge, president of the Australian Bishops' Conference, told me in March. When it openly discusses power, sexuality and the role of women, Germany's synodal pathway is accused of fuelling "schism". The concern in Rome is that the synod planned for October next year would have been a political-ecclesial

battle between competing visions of the Church. Embarking on a longer and deeper process of listening and consultation seeks to mitigate against this.

It also makes strategic sense. Last year, Sister Nathalie Becquart, the first female under-secretary of the Synod of Bishops' office, suggested to me that only those bishops who had embarked on synodal processes in their dioceses be invited to Rome for the next synod. The recent announcement aims to address the problem that the practice of synodality is foreign to many bishops.

I have reported on every synod during the Francis pontificate: the 2014 and 2015 synods on the family, the 2018 synod on young people and the 2019 synod on the Amazon. Most of those taking part described them as forums for free discussion and genuine discernment. But I have seen how synods come under pressure from two sides: those who oppose the synod process because they see it as a Trojan horse for change, and those who hope a synod will be the vehicle for pushing through changes they think the Church must make.

Disagreements cannot be avoided. Synodality offers a way of discussing contentious issues openly without a breach in communion. Cardinal Mario Grech, leader of the synod office, says while some argued in the past that Church unity was maintained by "strengthening the authority of pastors", today maintaining communion "requires circularity, reciprocity, journeying together". This is a subtle rebuttal to those in Rome who warn about a German "schism".

DURING HIS Pentecost homily, the Pope spoke about the "harmony of diversity" and the unity that is willed by the Holy Spirit. He warned that it is "the enemy" who wants "diversity to become opposition and so he makes them become ideologies". Francis often stresses that a synod is not a parliament where those in the majority can impose their ideas. Instead, true reform comes through consensus, which is not the same as allowing a small minority to veto any change: it is more like what Cardinal Newman meant when he spoke of a *conspiratio*, a single movement of bishops and faithful. Pope Francis is seeking is a reconfigured relationship between the faithful and the bishops, rooted in the belief that the Holy Spirit works through all the People of God. Vatican II, Professor Wijlens points out, "could bear fruit" because theology was developed at the local level, which then benefited the universal. She says the synod is using a similar dynamic.

Just as happened at the Vatican Council, some argue that synodality won't achieve anything. "Nothing to see here, please move on." Others talk fearfully of synods exacerbating divisions. Wijlens draws a comparison with the disciples who locked the doors when they met together after Jesus' death. Despite their fears, the women went to the tomb and the risen Jesus appeared to them. "Fear is not a good adviser," she says. "We need to have the courage to open the doors within ourselves and trust that the Holy Spirit will guide us."