

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

10th September 2020

Thursday of the Twenty-third Week of the Year
(Twenty-fifth Thursday of Isolation)

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com
Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk



Thanks to those who replied to my last scripture reflection with your own thoughts – if you want to be taken off the email list, or know anyone who may appreciate the contact, please let me know – or print it for a neighbour. (If you have only just started to receive these daily reflections it is because I have only just found your address, sorry) Thanks. Fr Peter.

Note from Fr Peter:

Please notice the Parish Quiz advert under 'Parish Notices'

Please encourage those who are afraid of coming to large gatherings that our present Masses have small numbers of attenders and this is a good place to begin a return to Mass:

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday at 9.30am at St John's

Wednesday at 9.30am at Ss Martin & Hilda's Chapel

Saturday at 6.00pm at St John's

We still celebrate the Resurrection on Sundays – **Which day is your 'Sunday Eucharist'?**

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

1 Corinthians 8:1-7,11-13

Now about food sacrificed to idols. 'We all have knowledge'; yes, that is so, but knowledge gives self-importance – it is love that makes the building grow. A man may imagine he understands something, but still not understand anything in the way that he ought to. But any man who loves God is known by him. Well then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: we know that idols do not really exist in the world and that there is no god but the One. And even if there were things called gods, either in the sky or on earth – where there certainly seem to be 'gods' and 'lords' in plenty – still for us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come and for whom we exist; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come and through whom we exist.

Some people, however, do not have this knowledge. There are some who have been so long used to idols that they eat this food as though it really had been sacrificed to the idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled by it. In this way your knowledge could become the ruin of someone weak, of a brother for whom Christ died. By sinning in this way against your brothers, and injuring their weak consciences, it would be Christ against whom you sinned. That is why, since food can be the occasion of my brother's downfall, I shall never eat meat again in case I am the cause of a brother's downfall.

Luke 6:27-38

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too; to the man who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from the man who robs you. Treat others as you would like them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks can you expect? For even sinners do that much. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. Instead, love your enemies and do good, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back.'

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

If Paul begins with 'Now, about' or just 'About' he is addressing a question from the list which he has obviously been sent from the Church in Corinth. It looks like the question today was something like: 'What are the rules on eating meat sacrificed to idols?'. The Church congregation doesn't seem to have got out of the habit of asking for rules from on high does it, but Paul gives us a wonderful example of looking at issues beyond simply 'giving a rule'! Jesus warned of joining the Pharisees in becoming a black and white, digital, rule-based community and Paul continues this concern that we look at the meaning and implications of our actions.

The firm foundations for this discussion are given to us in the first lines: 'be careful that knowledge (being the holder of the rule) doesn't leave you 'puffed up' – but that *"it is love that makes the building grow"*. As a community of Christians we are about building the Kingdom – be careful that just obeying rules will not build the Kingdom by showing love.

So, the question is "Is it alright to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols?" Corinth is a busy multinational city which hosted many religious groups with many gods and rituals. It is as if the questioner is saying: 'there is only one God and so all this sacrifice to other gods is just rubbish' -Oh, and it is well known that most of this meat, once sacrificed, finds its way onto the 'cheap but good' stalls on the market for good prices!!! (Well why not?)

As you can see from his letter, Paul agrees that there is only one God – and he even shows his humour when he says:

"And even if there were things called gods, either in the sky or on earth – where there certainly seem to be 'gods' and 'lords' in plenty – still for us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come and for whom we exist; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come and through whom we exist."

But Paul goes on to say there is more to this issue than a simple rule can deal with. These other people, with or without other gods, are still important people and they will be wishing to know what the Disciples of Jesus are about. If they notice Christians eating sacrificial meat they may think they are really pagans, or, maybe, that Christians can believe in more than one God at the same time. By being seen to eat this meat you may be a stumbling block to other's understanding of Jesus:

"By sinning in this way against your brothers, and injuring their weak consciences, it would be Christ against whom you sinned."

Paul seems very saddened that the questioner had such a rule-based faith and couldn't see the implications of an action. He is doing a very good job in training his people out of a rule-based faith into one which each member thinks through and develops to its full potential. He is helping them realise that a rule is a minimum but it is unlikely to *make the building grow*. Just 'following orders' can also be a stumbling block for others who watch. When we do an action, even though it is not wrong, it can have implications for others who do not understand. Paul is so clear about this danger that he promises never to eat meat again in case others may think he is worshipping idols!

Paul has succeeded in giving us a lesson in avoiding blind rule-keeping and by using a fairly 'safe' example. The passage is not really about meat at all, but the learning is transferable to

other actions reflecting our belief. Maybe we can follow this passage by looking at any of our faith practices which have become simply 'rule obeying' – we can then ponder what negative effects these actions might have on anyone just watching.

A few years ago I was in Myanmar (Burma), a fascinating place, and given a tour by a young educated woman who was a Buddhist. We looked at huge numbers of Temples and Pagodas and goodness knows how many huge statues of the Buddha. But further north the people honour another ancient group of Spirits called 'Nats'. Different Nats have special significance and so the people would leave money or offerings at their statue to promote help with health issues, pregnancy, addiction etc. I asked our guide if this spirit worship was common and she replied that in her house at home her parents have an altar with Nats displayed. When I asked if this was not somewhat contrary to Buddhism she answered that it was and that younger Buddhists would not tend to deal with these spirits. But then she added that it was common for people to have a number of faith beliefs at the same time!

I was surprised – but this is because we are used to worshipping one God and, if someone converted to Christianity from many gods it would be logical that they ceased to honour alternatives! This must have been the difference between Paul's approach to God and that of the average citizen of Corinth halfway through the first century AD! (But then I know Catholics who can't resist 'touching wood', looking at Horoscopes or inventing their own superstitious practices – They will laugh at them, but I wonder what others might make of them?)

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 10, 2020

"The task of "taking up the cross" becomes participating with Christ in the salvation of the world. Considering this, let us make sure that the cross hanging on the wall at home, or that little one that we wear around our neck, is a sign of our wish to be united with Christ in lovingly serving our brothers and sisters, especially the littlest and most fragile. The cross is the holy sign of God's Love, it is a sign of Jesus' Sacrifice, and is not to be reduced to a superstitious object or an ornamental necklace. Each time we fix our gaze on the image of Christ crucified, let us contemplate that he, as the true Servant of the Lord, has accomplished his mission, giving life, spilling his blood for the pardoning of sins."

Pope Francis

ANGELUS AUGUST 30, 2020

PARISH NOTICES:

Parish Quiz for CAFOD – *Please pass this on to other parishioners and encourage them*

Hi - Because we can't all gather together in person at the moment, we have decided it would be a great idea to have a Parish online quiz. This will take place on Sunday 13th September at 12 noon. We will be raising funds for Cafod - if you would like to play, please visit

<http://cafod.org.uk/celebration>

and search "online quiz". You will then see our fundraising page where it would be fantastic if you could make a donation to take part.

If you would like to take part, please also email me on deborahhelenwood@gmail.com. We will be hosting the quiz on Zoom. I will send you the Zoom link and details explaining how you access everything. For the best quiz experience, it would be great if you are able to access Zoom on one device and have another online device, e.g. mobile phone, to play along with on Kahoot. If not, please don't worry. If you can access Zoom, bring a pen and paper along and you can play along this way too.

If you have any questions at all, please just give me a call on 07883599511 or drop me an email.

Best wishes

Debbie Sumner

- **When you come to Mass:**

Despite getting used to physical distancing over the past three months returning to a familiar situation, like church, can make us forget we are still threatened by a virus that could kill vulnerable people. 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.

- 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.
- **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: https://www.wyre.gov.uk/forms/form/257/en/coronavirus_isolation_support_form

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 of anonymous responses from these Virus Times Reflections from our parishioners: Thanks to contributors.)

Thursday: *I have never before heard the word gentle in association with St Paul - must give that some thought.*

A mother, years ago was heard to grumble that her child had been at school for (?) weeks and had still not been taught the Hail Mary!!!!

Thursday: *Love the recipe reference and very true, that's why I like your thoughts Father, I can reread and digest - bit like carrot cake! (Isn't it great when a recipe become so well known that it has become part of you? It even become known as 'mum's scone recipe' Fr Peter)*

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Alan	Could we pray for Judith Reeves' dad who has become suddenly very ill and the cause is not clear. It is difficult caring for people during Covid!
Jacinta's Nana Lyn	Poorly and asks for your prayers
A Lady in Intensive Care	The Parish WhatsApp Group ask for your prayers
The People of Beirut	
Various Older People we worry about	Whilst we are enjoying the promise of loosening lockdown we still have concerns for relations and friends who have signs of Covid-19 and who have been taken to Hospital. Please pray for these people – and for those we don't know as 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.
Maureen O'Connell & Family(Not Covid-19)	Mrs Donnelly's Mum
Paul Sharrock (Not Covid-19) (and family: Kathryn, Mary & Rachael)	<i>Is showing continued, but slow, progress. He is eating a proper diet and having a lot of physiotherapy – which he's not enjoying! Fr Peter</i>
Our Teachers	