

# St John the Evangelist, Poulton

30<sup>th</sup> April 2021

*Fourth Friday of Easter*

*Feast of St Joseph the Worker*

*Fifty-seventh Friday of Isolation*

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*"It made the pagans very happy to hear this and they thanked the Lord for his message"*

*"... but the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit."*

## **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 13:44-52**

*The next sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of God. When they saw the crowds, the Jews, prompted by jealousy, used blasphemies and contradicted everything Paul said. Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly. 'We had to proclaim the word of God to you first, but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, we must turn to the pagans. For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said:*

*I have made you a light for the nations,*

*so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.'*

*It made the pagans very happy to hear this and they thanked the Lord for his message; all who were destined for eternal life became believers. Thus the word of the Lord spread through the whole countryside.*

*But the Jews worked upon some of the devout women of the upper classes and the leading men of the city and persuaded them to turn against Paul and Barnabas and expel them from their territory. So they shook the dust from their feet in defiance and went off to Iconium; but the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.*

## **John 14:7-14**

*Jesus said to his disciples:*

*'If you know me, you know my Father too.*

*From this moment you know him and have seen him.'*

*Philip said, 'Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied.'*

*'Have I been with you all this time, Philip,' said Jesus to him, 'and you still do not know me?*

*'To have seen me is to have seen the Father,*

*so how can you say, "Let us see the Father"?"*

*Do you not believe*

*that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?*

*The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself:*

*it is the Father, living in me, who is doing this work.*

*You must believe me when I say*

*that I am in the Father and the Father is in me;*

*believe it on the evidence of this work, if for no other reason.*

*I tell you most solemnly,*

*whoever believes in me*

*will perform the same works as I do myself,*

*he will perform even greater works,*

*because I am going to the Father.*

*Whatever you ask for in my name I will do,*

*so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

*If you ask for anything in my name,*

*I will do it.'*

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

A strange thing is happening to Paul and his friends as they take the news of the resurrection of Jesus to far away places. What happens here for the first time will become the general practice for the future. The problem seems to be made more difficult when the local Jews see other, non-Jewish, locals being interested in what the Disciples are saying.

The group always begins by visiting the synagogue in the town or city they visit. They seem to be naturally welcomed by the other Jews and invited to be part of the community.

As we see today many (Not all) of the Jewish population are suspicious of the development the disciples are reporting.

*The next sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of God.  
When they saw the crowds, the Jews,  
prompted by jealousy,  
used blasphemies and contradicted everything Paul said*

Paul and Barnabas speak out to them, not simply to attract them to what they were bringing, but mainly to declare a huge change in their practice which came from Jesus:

*we must turn to the pagans.  
For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said:  
'I have made you a light for the nations,  
so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.'*

We have seen that the Jews far away from Jerusalem were nowhere near as inward looking as those in Jerusalem. However, we must not forget that the Jew's understanding of converting other people to Judaism is not the same as Jesus call to welcome 'all nations to God'. Recently, speaking about non-Jews in the state of Israel, Rabbi Dov Lior said:

*"According to Jewish law, Judaism has no interest in influencing someone to convert. There's no such thing. If someone comes to convert, then it's a good deed to bring them closer. But to go out and be a missionary? To influence someone? That's not the way of Judaism," Lior said.*

We do need to keep in mind how 'foreign' it must have been for the Disciples to work under Jesus' command to 'go and Baptise all people' – this is not a power message, but a revelation of the reality that God wanted to be available for all people in the world.

We are not in the business of creating more and more Catholics, but the business of sharing the Good News of living the life of Jesus in the light of the Holy Spirit to those who wish to share it. Again, we notice, this reality is a free gift and a joyful one we wish to share – not keep to ourselves. We cannot demand that others appreciate this Good News, or that they are less loved by God if they are not ready to share it with us – as we saw recently when people could not accept what Jesus was teaching they walked away, and Jesus did not worry!

The fact that some of the Jews could not move their minds to see what the disciples were offering did not affect the success of the mission they were on. However it probably changed their expectations considerably! :

*"It made the pagans very happy to hear this  
and they thanked the Lord for his message"  
"...but the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit."*

Keep your eyes open for this message of the outcome of the mission which connected the Holy Spirit with Joy in the touring community! We need to see it, also, as a sign in our own Jesus communities – if it is not evident we need to ponder quickly (Not sure you can 'ponder quickly'! Discuss)

We read the scriptures to help us reflect on how well we reflect this same community today. In various times during the history of the Church we have been forced to become inward looking and stagnant (Often by political and frightening situations). But we can also lose our Joy in the Holy Spirit by allowing our lack of imagination to allow ourselves to be inward looking. This Church of the first century was a great adventure which demanded they looked outwards to see what the Spirit was asking of them. Things looked different but they reflected on the scriptures and opened themselves to the Spirit to give them guidance.

This Holy Spirit aspect of their ministry, their lives, and for some their deaths, will remain and develop as we read on – they were always moving forward and being open and brave. This would be a good scriptural place to decide whether, as the Church in 2021, we wish to be more like the early Disciples, and ensure we are not reflecting the inward looking Jews who criticised Paul and his companions.

We can see again today, this is the basis of Pope Francis' teaching on the call of Jesus and the need the Church has for the Holy Spirit.

SATURDAY, MAY 1, 2021

*"Christ's love is not selective; it embraces everyone... He is everyone's shepherd. Jesus wants everyone to be able to receive the Father's love and encounter God. And the Church is called to carry on this mission of Christ. Beyond those who participate in our communities, there is the majority, many people, who do so only at particular moments or never. But this does not mean they are not God's children: the Father entrusts everyone to Jesus the Good Shepherd, and He gave His life for everyone. Brothers and sisters, Jesus defends, knows and loves us, everyone."*

Pope Francis

APRIL 25, 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:** 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.

**Saturday:** **Understanding the signs: Food for thought:**

I had a friend who used to do a lot of serious thinking. In speaking of him I would say that "he chews things over." We also speak of someone "munching" an apple meaning that the person eats steadily and often audibly. When Jesus is responding to the question: "How can this fellow give us his flesh to eat?" John, writing in Greek, uses a very physical word which is best translated as "munch" or "chew". And so, in this accurate translation, Jesus' words are: "The one who chews (munches) my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life".

When we share in the Eucharist and "eat this bread and drink this cup" we are indicating our readiness to ponder deeply ("chew on") the meaning and significance of this act of communion which makes us one, not only with the one we claim as Lord, but also one with each other, his true body called to his mission: "My food, he said, is to do the will of the one who sent me".

Is our food to be anything less?

**Saturday:** Three disjointed thoughts  
"Even with his eyes wide open he could see nothing at all" was the sentence which stood out to me - I so often feel like that.

The picture of St Paul having fallen from a horse had come into my mind too. Do you ever wish you could have read the book before you saw the pictures?

Did your mother ever send you for a loaf of bread and you bit the corners off on the way home, or was that just my generation?

*(Just "Yes" to all three – Fr Peter)*

### **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>
Maroulla RIP	Maroulla's family thanks you for your prayer. The Requiem Mass will be at St Martin's Chapel on Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> May at 2.30pm <i>(admittance by invitation of 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>