

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

4th May 2021

Fifth Tuesday of Easter

*Feast of The English Martyrs
Fifty-eighth Tuesday of Isolation*

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*'Peace I bequeath to you,
my own peace I give you,
a peace the world cannot give,
this is my gift to you.*

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)

Acts 11-18

¹¹ When the crowd saw what Paul had cured the cripple, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" ¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: ¹⁵ "Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. ¹⁶ In the past, he let all nations go their own way. ¹⁷ Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." ¹⁸ Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

Acts 14:19-28

Some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium, and turned the people against the apostles. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the town, thinking he was dead. The disciples came crowding round him but, as they did so, he stood up and went back to the town. The next day he and Barnabas went off to Derbe.

Having preached the Good News in that town and made a considerable number of disciples, they went back through Lystra and Iconium to Antioch. They put fresh heart into the disciples, encouraging them to persevere in the faith. 'We all have to experience many hardships' they said 'before we enter the kingdom of God.' In each of these churches they appointed elders, and with prayer and fasting they commended them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

They passed through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. Then after proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia and from there sailed for Antioch, where they had originally been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.

On their arrival they assembled the church and gave an account of all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the pagans. They stayed there with the disciples for some time.

John 14:27-31

Jesus said to his disciples:

*'Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you,
a peace the world cannot give,
this is my gift to you.*

Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

You heard me say: I am going away, and shall return.

*If you loved me you would have been glad to know that I am going to the Father,
for the Father is greater than I.*

*I have told you this now before it happens,
so that when it does happen you may believe.*

I shall not talk with you any longer,

because the prince of this world is on his way.

He has no power over me,

but the world must be brought to know

that I love the Father

and that I am doing exactly what the Father told me.'

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

We have now travelled for long enough through the Acts of the Apostles after the resurrection to begin to look at, not only what they taught, but also, the methods they used to teach. We can then look at ourselves today and ensure we are doing the same and using similar methods.

I have added a section from yesterday's reading to make sure we don't think Paul and Barnabas were simply demanding that people believe what they believe – notice they are always offering Good News which is better and simpler than their hearers' own beliefs. Yesterday's reading sees Paul and Barnabas doing what Jesus does – they heal. But some of the locals were so impressed that, using their own beliefs, they saw Paul and Barnabas as gods and were prepared to offer them sacrifices! (This is a problem with miracles – people can miss the message!). Paul relates that all they were doing was bringing Good News! They showed their own humanity and then explained how what God had been doing, and was doing in Jesus, was far simpler than their own understanding of gods, and, if they thought for a bit, what they were pointing to was also their own experience.

Out of their own interest the people continue to turn up, listen to Paul and Barnabas and ask questions. They had brought Good News and the people were attracted to Good News. "Good News" and "Gospel" are both from the Greek for what we now refer to as: "Evangelisation". You may remember that the 1990s were declared 'the decade of Evangelisation' in our Church (and many other Christian churches) and during that year I attended a rally with thousands of young Catholics. Cardinal Basil Hume was on stage at one point and keen to define 'Evangelisation' – I was glad, and haven't forgotten his words. Cardinal Hume said it was simple: 'Evangelisation is two people sitting on a park bench speaking to each other about Jesus'. Of course it involves openness, honesty, respect, personal experience, interest, and so much more.

Now let us see this at work in Paul, Barnabas and the people they were dealing with. The people came to hear Paul and Barnabas freely but with questions. The people were obviously not having 'Religion pushed down their throats' or more of them would have walked away when they heard they were coming! In fact some of the peoples' main problem was that they saw Paul and Barnabas fulfilling their own understanding of Good News!!

What of these 'Jews from Antioch and Iconium' who had arrived simply to turn people away from Paul and Barnabas? These seemed to be acting out the opposite of 'Evangelisation' as they were pressing their own particular understanding on others and squashing their human rights. There are no questions – just stones being thrown!

The Catholic Church speaks of 'Evangelisation' as a way of speaking about Jesus with others in an honest and free way. It is worth noticing that some Christian churches not only speak of 'Evangelism', but also seem to use methods of evangelism which force their own faith on others – and put them off. (This is not always true because sometimes the two words are used as meaning the same thing.) The disciples teaching warns us to be careful that we do not force on others our own particular picture of the Faith of the Church. We are all aware, I hope, the damage which has been done in society by people trying to force their religious belief on others – how many in society have a natural expectation that religious people will preach AT them; even though we are not going to do that! What can we do?

At the end of today's reading today the disciples went back to Antioch and the church assembled to greet them and to hear their account of the Journey. The scripture does not say they '*told how many converts they had gained to what they believed*' – The scripture says:

On their arrival they assembled the church and gave an account of all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the pagans. They stayed there with the disciples for some time.

Their report to the assembly was not Paul and Barnabas telling how people agreed with their teaching and so how great it all was; But telling what God had done with them! If we remember to do this then what we teach will not be 'where I feel most comfortable' but 'what God has done with us' - which will teach us, too! And I bet the disciples spent the next 'some time' sitting on park benches and speaking about Jesus!?

A couple of extras:

I have found this quote by Vincent Donovan helpful over the years:

'in working with young people (or others), do not try to call them back to where they were, and do not try to call them to where you are, as beautiful as the place may seem to you. You must have the courage to go with them to a place that neither you nor they have ever been before.'

Someone after Mass this morning offered this help which is good:

'Evangelisation involves making a definite personal decision to go out for a walk – But then looking about to notice where God is working'.

TUESDAY, MAY 4, 2021

"Let us pray that those in charge of finance will work with governments to regulate the financial sphere and protect citizens from its dangers."

Pope Francis

PRAYER INTENTION – MAY 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. 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.)

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.

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?

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Len Rawcliffe RIP	Len's Requiem Mass will be at St John's on 14 th 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 th 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?

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>