

Feast Days this Week:

Monday: St Rose of Lima

Tuesday: St Bartholomew

Wednesday: St Louis

Friday: St Monica

Saturday: St Augustine

Cycle of Prayer:

We pray for: a deeper understanding between Christians and Jews; for human life; for those who suffer persecution, oppression and denial of human rights; for Europe, St Bridget, and St Teresa Benedicta.

PARISHIONERS WHO ARE UNWELL If you would like the parish to pray for someone who is currently unwell, please email news@stfrancisgoosnargh.org.uk or ring Father Sony on 01772 865229. It will be then be included in the newsletter. We have an area in church where you can write a prayer intention on a card and hang it up if you prefer it not to go on the parish newsletter.

CHURCH DONATIONS With many people still unable to attend church we still need to maintain an income for maintenance. There are several ways you can still make your contributions including by cheque or direct debit. For details please go to the church website or contact Tom Smyth on 01772 865689.

Attendance and Collection: Sunday 8 August – attendance: 28 | collection: £188.00

Daily Mass: live at 9.30am from St Clare's in Preston can be accessed on their YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/StClaresChurch/>

Sunday Obligation: Statement from the Catholic Bishops of England on 19 July: We are mindful of the certain fact that the Covid-19 virus is still circulating in society. It is our continuing judgement that it is not possible at the present time for all of the faithful to attend Mass on a Sunday. **For more reading visit** <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/sunday-it-is-our-day/>



St Francis Hill Chapel Parish Newsletter

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**In case of emergency (and unable to contact Father Sony) please ring
Father Dutton on 01772 782641 or Canon Doyle on 01772 782244**

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

22 August 2021 (Readings: Year B)

Parish Mission Statement

Our Parish, guided by the example of our patron St Francis of Assisi, seeks to be a welcoming Catholic Community, by living, sharing and growing in faith. We strive to deepen our own relationship with Christ and meet the needs of others.

Mass today is for the people of the parish.

Please pray for all those whose anniversaries occur about this time, especially James Wilfrid Bolton, Theresa Clare Southworth, Bernard Dewhurst and John Henry Phayre. *May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.*

SAFETY RULES FOR MASS

Stewards will be on duty to ensure that safety procedures are followed. Full details are on our website. Please do read them.

Face masks will need to be worn.

Please follow these guidelines once entering church:

- * **Sanitise hands** on entry.
- * A hymn book and mass book will be given to you on entry. Singing is now permitted.
- * Please do **keep your distance** – use the high visibility tape on floor as a guide.
- * Place your collection on the collection plate **as you enter**.
- * Please take a newsletter on entry and **take it away when you leave**.
- * At Holy Communion:

Please wear a mask as you go up the aisle to communion and remove their mask before they receive the sacrament.

People from upstairs will go first down the right-hand side and return down the opposite aisle to maintain social distancing.

People on the right-hand side will then receive Holy Communion, followed by people on the left-hand side – guided by the stewards.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

A few years ago, we attended mass at the church of St Maximilian Kolbe in Malta. I had never heard of Maximilian Kolbe but, the day we were there, 14 August, happened to be his feast day, so I soon discovered what a fascinating and courageous person he was, and how he came to be the patron saint of prisoners, drug addicts, journalists, and the pro-life movement.

Maximilian Kolbe was born in Poland in 1894. His mother's dedication to our Blessed Lady, reciting the Angelus and the Rosary daily, strongly influenced his own life-long devotion to the Immaculate Conception. Together with his older brother, Maximilian entered a local Franciscan seminary as a teenager. At the age of eighteen his superiors sent him to study in Rome, where he earned doctorates in philosophy and theology. He was ordained a priest in 1918 and then returned to the new post-World War 1 Poland. For the next twenty plus years, Father Maximilian powered his way through life. He taught in a Franciscan seminary. He started an immense publishing house which printed devotional materials, and he founded a new Franciscan monastery, which rapidly grew into one of the largest in Poland. And in 1930 he became a missionary to the Far East. He went to China, had little success, and so went on to Japan, where he founded a monastery near Nagasaki. He also started a publishing house in India. In 1936 he returned to Poland due to ill health, but continued to manage various Marian publications, which were widely circulated, and even procured a radio licence and began broadcasting from his own monastery radio station.

When the Germans invaded Poland in September 1939, Fr Kolbe's work was curtailed. However, he organised a hospital at the monastery and, along with the reduced community of brothers, gave shelter to refugees, including about 2,000 Jews. This led to his arrest by the Germans, and he was held prisoner for almost three months. He was pressured, but refused, to sign a document recognising his German ancestry (Kolbe's father was an ethnic German) in exchange for more food rations and better treatment. Then in February 1941, Nazi SS men came and closed his monastery. Fr Kolbe and four other friars were arrested and transferred to the heavy labour division of Auschwitz. For a short period, in the horror of Auschwitz, he carried out his priestly ministry as best he could and endured severe beatings for it.

In July, just two months after he arrived, a prisoner escaped from the camp. As both a deterrent and reprisal, the head of the camp ordered ten men to be starved to death in the escapee's place. The victims were chosen at random from a prisoner roll call. One of those chosen was a married man named Francis. He begged for mercy as he was a family man with a wife and children. What followed this desperate pleading was profound and left an indelible impression on all who witnessed it. Possibly inspired by the fact that the chosen man shared the name Francis with the founder of his religious order, Fr Kolbe is said to have slowly emerged from the bedraggled group of prisoners. He spoke directly to the commanding officer in German: "I want to take his place, because he has a wife and children. I am a Catholic priest." A few moments of silence and then the officer replied, "Right!"

After two weeks of no food or water in a bunker, a guard injected carbolic acid into the arm of Fr Kolbe on 14 August. His body was cremated the next day, 15 August, the Feast of the Assumption. The man whose life he saved, Francis Gajowniczek, lived for another fifty-three years, to the age of 93, dying in 1995. He was present in Rome when Pope Saint John Paul II, who lived just an hour from Auschwitz in 1941, canonised his fellow Polish Saint Maximilian Kolbe in 1982.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe, you were prepared to be generous in your last moments by a long life of sacrifice, humility, and devotion. May we so prepare ourselves day in and day out, so that when a moment of heroic generosity presents itself, we will respond like you.

Mike Bryan

First reading

Joshua 24:1-2,15-18

We will serve the Lord, for he is our God

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel together at Shechem; then he called the elders, leaders, judges and scribes of Israel, and they presented themselves before God. Then Joshua said to all the people, 'If you will not serve the Lord, choose today whom you wish to serve, whether the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are now living. As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.'

The people answered, 'We have no intention of deserting the Lord and serving other gods! Was it not the Lord our God who brought us and our ancestors out of the land of Egypt, the house of slavery, who worked those great wonders before our eyes and preserved us all along the way we travelled and among all the peoples through whom we journeyed? What is more, the Lord drove all those peoples out before us, as well as the Amorites who used to live in this country. We too will serve the Lord, for he is our God.'

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 33(34):2-3,16-23

Second reading

Ephesians 5:21-32

Christ loves the Church, because it is his body

Give way to one another in obedience to Christ. Wives should regard their husbands as they regard the Lord, since as Christ is head of the Church and saves the whole body, so is a husband the head of his wife; and as the Church submits to Christ, so should wives to their husbands, in everything. Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to make her holy. He made her clean by washing her in water with a form of words, so that when he took her to himself she would be glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless. In the same way, husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man to love his wife is for him to love himself. A man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it; and that is

the way Christ treats the Church, because it is his body – and we are its living parts. *For this reason, a man must leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one body.* This mystery has many implications; but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church.

Gospel Acclamation

cf.Jn6:63,68

Alleluia, alleluia!

Your words are spirit, Lord, and they are life;

you have the message of eternal life.

Alleluia!

Gospel

John 6:60-69

Who shall we go to? You are the Holy One of God

After hearing his doctrine many of the followers of Jesus said, 'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?' Jesus was aware that his followers were complaining about it and said, 'Does this upset you? What if you should see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before?'

'It is the spirit that gives life,
the flesh has nothing to offer.

The words I have spoken to you are spirit
and they are life.

'But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the outset those who did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. He went on, 'This is why I told you that no one could come to me unless the Father allows him.' After this, many of his disciples left him and stopped going with him.

Then Jesus said to the Twelve, 'What about you, do you want to go away too?' Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are the Holy One of God.'

HOMILY

Joshua 24:1-2, 15-18; Ephesians 5:21-32. John 6: 60-69

Take it or leave it! Essentially, that is the message of today's First Reading and Gospel. The Israelites, the disciples, and we, are presented with a stark

choice. There is no leeway, no compromise, no ifs or buts. Either we are for God, or we are against Him: either we accept Jesus' words about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, without attempting to explain them away, or we cannot count ourselves among His disciples.

The Israelites, after wandering in the desert, have finally reached the Promised Land; and Joshua, who has become their leader following the death of Moses, presents them with alternatives. Either they can follow pagan gods, or they can become disciples of the one true God: they cannot do both.

Joshua gives them what is effectively an ultimatum because, after repeatedly grumbling throughout their time in the wilderness, they have now become careless in their adherence to the one God. Immediately, the people declare their allegiance to God, but their commitment would prove to be fragile, and through the centuries there would be repeated instances of backsliding.

It is fairly clear how this situation is repeated in our world today. People have discovered a whole range of alternative gods, in the forms of comfort, material prosperity, and a sort of superstitious scientism, which deifies science in a way which sensible, rational scientists avoid.

That is the easy, comforting explanation of Joshua's question as it is posed today. It is too easy, too comforting. It is easy and comforting for us to claim that we have made our choice and avoided those traps.

What, though, of the other traps? What about the trap of grumbling, which was the beginning of the Israelites' rebellion? I am not suggesting that we should all become Pollyannas, finding everything wonderful and denying reality, joining the ranks of the "Smile, Jesus loves you" brigade. That sort of relentless cheerfulness can be as destructive as its opposite, as GK Chesterton points out in the Fr. Brown story "The Three Tools of Death". Yet, if we are honest, we may well discover that we are in danger of falling into a negative mindset. This can quickly develop into an inability to see goodness anywhere, and can lead to effectively denying the goodness of God.

Further, is our commitment to God as genuine as it seems, or is it focused on a god of our own creation, whose ideas conveniently match our own? Do we really worship and serve God, or are we devotees of our own way of seeing and doing things, our own fixed ideas of morality (especially sexual morality) our own preferred style and mood of worship? I still recall the warning of the late Mgr. McReavy, delivered at my first, breathtaking Easter Vigil in the seminary, that liturgy can become an end in itself, "whether it be trad liturgy or pop, folksy or dignified".

As Joshua faces the Israelites (and us) with a choice, so does Jesus face His disciples (and us). Are we prepared to accept His claim to be the Bread of

Life, His instruction to eat His flesh and drink His blood? Some of His followers are not, and His reaction to them is fascinating. He doesn't say "Whoa! Hang on a minute! You haven't understood. What I really mean is...." He lets them go with the Parthian shot that they lack the spirit (or more accurately "the Spirit") to accept Him. Furthermore, He compels the Twelve, His chosen inner circle, to answer the same question. They too must say "Yea" or "Nay". They too must decide.

If the Twelve had decided to leave, what would that have meant for Jesus' mission, for salvation history? We shall never know, because Peter, the chosen leader, speaks for them all, and commits them to faith and to following. He would have had no more idea than the leavers what Jesus' words meant—they would have conveyed nothing until the Last Supper, and those new words spoken over the bread and wine—but he is prepared to entrust himself, and the Church, entirely to Jesus. What about us?