



Sunday Reflection

Ordinary Time

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 15 August 2021

Pentecost 12

Jesus is the living bread coming down from heaven and giving eternal life to all who receive him. So let us praise and worship God, whose work is full of majesty and splendour and whose righteousness endures for ever.

Reflection for this week's Gospel

"Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day."

John 6:54

An Illustration to set the scene

"He put his arm around her, pressed her to his breast, cavorted with her in (that) shameless, indecent whirling-dance... and engaged in a familiarity that broke all the bounds of good breeding."

That's a description of the waltz from a book written by the German author Sophie von La Roche in 1771.

In England the dance was described as *"riotous and indecent"*.

Nowadays, of course, the waltz is a perfectly respectable dance and we are used to seeing much closer intimacy between dancing couples.

In September last year the **Colston Hall** in Bristol was renamed Bristol Beacon. Edward Colston was a slave trader and with the wealth he acquired through that trade he endowed schools and almshouses. His name was given to the concert hall a hundred and fifty years after he died. It was renamed because of Colston's involvement with the slave trade, which we now find repugnant and unacceptable.

Something that shocks one generation becomes normal and acceptable in the next. And sometimes something that shocks us now was once considered perfectly respectable and legitimate.

Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life,” says Jesus, *“and I will raise them up on the last day.”*

It might be hard for us to imagine the shocking impact these words had on the Jews listening to Jesus and may have today on people who hear them in church for the first time.

The idea of eating human flesh and drinking human blood is repugnant and shocking and, for Jews, then and now, there is also the commandment in Genesis 9 that forbids them to eat meat which still has blood in it: *“Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you... Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.”*

In his Gospel John does not give us an account of the Last Supper, but in the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke we hear words similar to those used by Jesus in today's Gospel reading. Jesus gives bread and wine to his disciples saying

“Take, eat; this is my body”, and: *“Drink... all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”*

Here Jesus is using bread and wine symbolically but in language that may be as shocking to his disciples in the upper room as is the language he uses in Capernaum, when he addresses the crowds who have gathered to listen to him.

Indeed, these words of Jesus prove to be too much for many of his followers, who leave him at this point, and maybe we still struggle to understand them today.

How can we reflect on the application to our lives?

In a service of Holy Communion, or the Eucharist, we are invited to *“receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you, and his blood which he shed for you... feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving”*.

We're reminded that, as John says at the beginning of his Gospel, in Jesus God's Word becomes flesh and lives among us. Jesus is the Son of Man who in his humanity understands the life we live and experiences all the joys and sorrows that we do.

We receive into our bodies, our flesh, the fullness of human life found in Jesus.

We absorb that fullness of life so that it can transform us and enable us to become the people that God wants us to be.

We're also reminded that from the body, the flesh, of Jesus flows God's life-blood and we receive that life-blood so that we might also absorb the divine and eternal life of Jesus, the Son of God.

Having received the body and blood of Christ we are called to live his risen life, to bring life to others, to give light to the world, and to invite others to join us in our journey of faith, strengthened and encouraged by the true food and true drink we receive each time we share bread and wine.

“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.”

John 6:54

Please share your response to this reflection to Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God' spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to

share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

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