

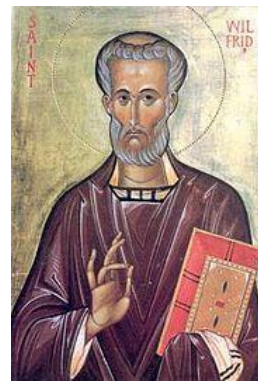
Weekly Newsletter During the Covid-19 Pandemic

6<sup>th</sup> September 2020

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Today is Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

(OF) Readings for today are: -

First Reading	Ezekiel 33:7-9
Responsorial Psalm	Psalm 94
Second Reading	Romans 13:8-10
Gospel	Matthew 18:15-20

*"If he listens to you, you have won back your brother"*

In last week's Gospel Peter rebuked the Lord, he wanted to be in control, but he soon found out the reality. The Vicar of Christ does not tell Jesus what to do. But how to deal with conflict within the Church. We are accustomed to thinking of the early church as a model for all of us. Acts of the Apostles gives us a few sentences which speak of the members of the church living in community and sharing what they had of earthly goods:

*All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper[a]), and to prayer. 43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met*

together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity[b]— 47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

But a reading of other parts of Acts or the letters of St Paul soon show even the first generation of Christians had their disagreements and fallings out as well as bad behaviour. What to do about it? How should Christians follow the example of their Lord? Well today we have a structure proposed for conflict resolution from the Lord Himself:

*If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother.*

*If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.'*

*If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector.*

If you have a conflict with another Christian tell them about it, this is often easier said than done in real-life, although supremely easy on Twitter these days where too often it seems Catholics spend their whole time putting each other down. But to say to someone's face that you think they are in the wrong can be a difficult undertaking. If your fellow Christian takes exception to this and refuses to listen, then take along two or three others to be witnesses to your next attempt. A legal process in embryo. ~I don't suppose any of us have tried this approach ourselves but the Church has since these days had a procedure to follow to resolve conflicts in the Church. Hence, we have our system of canon law which sets out how a trial is to be conducted when they arise. Having spent two years in Rome with a lecture every day on procedural law it may come as a surprise to hear much of this is never used in ordinary Catholic life, but it can be and in some. Places it is.

The final sentence tells us what to do if the offender won't listen to us with our witnesses: seek a judgement from the church. If the offender won't be reconciled the Church can then decree expulsion: treat them as a Gentile or tax collector. This is what we now call excommunication.

Excommunication conjures up images of solemn ceremony with cowled monks chanting while candles are extinguished. If you remember the film Becket that is how it is done. However, nothing so dramatic occurs nowadays. In fact, excommunication isn't what it used to be. If you're excommunicated you don't stop being a Catholic: you are not thrown out of the church but your rights, such as access to the sacraments, or holding an office in the church, are restricted. One feature of excommunication is the 'latae sententiae' excommunication which does not require any court procedure but is incurred automatically by committing the offence. Of these offences a number are of such gravity that only the pope can lift the excommunication.

It should be remembered that excommunication is what is termed a medicinal penalty. The other type is the expiatory penalty which is when a penalty is imposed which aims at recompense for the offence committed. A medicinal penalty is one that seeks to bring about healing. Normally it is only imposed after a warning to stop doing whatever it is that is disrupting the life of the Church. So, for example theologians who have expressed ideas publicly which are not in keeping with the teaching of the church. A warning is issued first inviting them to recant. Thumb screws aren't used nowadays. But in the case of an automatic excommunication there can be no warning

So, what are these automatic excommunications? Violation of the Blessed Sacrament, physical attack on the pope, absolution of an accomplice in sin against the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment, unauthorised consecration of a bishop, direct violation of the seal of confession. All these are

reserved to the Holy See. Procuring of an abortion, and apostasy, heresy, and schism. A cleric physically attacking a bishop These can be resolved locally. In fact, it is the common practice for every priest to be given the delegation to absolve abortion these days.

However, as with all credible legal systems things are nuanced. There are mitigating and aggravating circumstances to take into consideration. For example, with abortion mitigating circumstances are being under 16, being unaware of violating a law, acting out of force or fear, lacking the use of reason.

This may all seem a long way from the Lord and his little group of disciples but one thing that makes canon law unique is that it is always to be applied with the compassion of Christ. We all know the danger is that people get carried away with legal systems and this was one of the Lord`s sticking points with the Pharisees who loved nothing more than a legal argument and in doing so were often in danger of forgetting the purpose of the law which is the good of souls. *Suprema lex salus animarum*. The supreme law is the salvation of souls: this is the last of the Church`s 1752 canons in the code of canon law. All of which is a reminder in these days of Twitter abuse even among disagreeing Catholics that we are called to build up not break down to heal, not to wound so that we may be living stones in the one temple of God which is His body offered for us and risen to new life.

*"Lord help me to heal wounds, to build bridges, to offer and accept forgiveness to my brothers and sisters in Christ"*



## Today is the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

EF readings for today are: -

Introit	Psalm 83: 10, 11
Epistle	Galatians 5:16-24
Gradual	Psalm 117: 8, 9
Gospel	Matthew 6:24-33

### "No man can serve two masters"

Today's Gospel is taken from the Sermon on the Mount. High standards are set, and the bar is raised. How often do we think "I don't know what to confess: I don't get out much" Read this and see where you fall short. There is never a dull moment in Christian life. Everyday there is a battle to be fought. We have the spiritual armoury if we choose to use it and we will need it because we face a cunning foe. One who will use every trick in the book to bring us down.

You cannot serve two masters. Maybe you saw *The Servant of Two Masters* in the West End or at Theatre Royal by the great 18<sup>th</sup> century comic playwright Goldoni. I must admit I found it rather dull. I only went because I had seen a college production in English College which I enjoyed. But, while trying to serve two masters gives scope for comic possibilities, the Gospel isn't taking us into the world of farce. The Lord asks us to choose: do we serve him or Mammon? Can we live without planning for tomorrow?

While we may be somewhat irritated by the injunction not to worry about our financial future and especially at this time of uncertainty and growing unemployment and collapse, some have tried to take this all at its word. Last week we had the visit of Fr Philomeno, (who wrote to thank all those who volunteered), and it was notably the Franciscans who tried to live by this. Francis wanted to place all his trust in God and live a life free of worries about the morrow. While this worked for a hugely charismatic fellow like Francis, trying to organise a community on this principle was difficult, and Francis followers soon split into the Conventuals and the Spirituals. Conventuals led by St Bonaventure toned down the more impractical aspects of Franciscan spirituality while spirituals tried to imitate Francis as closely as possible, but some fell afoul of the Church for advocating the total poverty of Christ. Debate focussed on the nature of the common fund the apostles were known to have. Ah yes said the Spirituals, there was a common fund but look who was in charge of it: Judas! We are told the names of rich women who provided funds for the Lord and the 12. Franciscan communities argued over whether it was permitted to eat chickpeas as they needed to be soaked overnight before they could be used! Some of the more extreme Spirituals lapsed into heresy. The pope, John xxii, declared belief in the total poverty of Christ to be heresy. Meanwhile, later it was the Franciscans who were pioneers in the field of banking with the *Monti di pieta*, a kind of cross between a credit union and a pawnbroker, offering loans designed to put the Jewish moneylenders out of business and to combat usury

But the vision remains of a life according to the Beatitudes. What are we to make of it? At the start of the lockdown thoughts were very much for the morrow as supermarkets were emptied of essentials: flour, pasta and, famously, toilet rolls. I think we all felt anxious as we didn't know how things would develop and would there be food shortages which might lead to riots and the breakdown of law and order. Thank goodness this wasn't the case and the food chain has held up.



But where does prudence end and hoarding begin? The verb used says we are not to fret over tomorrow's needs; that doesn't mean we are not to provide for them. What degree of worrying is sinful? I think we have to apply this on an individual basis. Some of us are more naturally generous than others; some of us are worriers, some are not. Many people have to make provision for other lives besides their own. What the Lord is calling for is a greater trust in the Father to provide. I often find when I give some money away, I soon get it given back from someone else. To use money, tainted as it is as the Lord says elsewhere, for building up the work of God should be our aim. As much as we measure out is the amount we shall receive. This is only our temporary home. Nothing lasts forever here. Only our life with God survives this world. Put our efforts into that and we will find peace of heart. Another Franciscan, St Pio of Pietrelcina summed it up as "Pray, hope and don't worry" Let the lilies of the field in all their glory remind us of the God who made them and the eternal life in the beauty of heaven he calls us to.

### Mass Intentions

Please remember Canon Michael continues, as he has throughout the pandemic, to say daily Mass, if you have any intentions for Mass please put these in an envelope and pop through the letter box, or place them on the collection plate at the end of Sunday's Mass.

*This Week 6<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> September 2020*

**Sunday 10:** People of the parish  
**12:** Daniel McQuillan

**Monday:** Intentions of LMS

**Tuesday:** Donald Trump

**Wednesday:** Abandoned souls in purgatory

**Thursday:** 12.05 Requiem Mass for Jimmy Hughes

**Friday:** Intentions of AT

**Saturday:** Conversion of Friends

**Sunday: 10:** People of the Parish  
**12:** Intentions of Pat Turnbull

*Mass is said at approximately 10.00am each weekday*

*Please remember in your prayers the sick of the parish and all those who have recently died*

We pray for all those, teachers and pupils returning to school this week, that they may have a successful, happy, healthy, and safe start to the new school year.



### Special Mass Collections

There are three collections this autumn that are mandated - all of them relating to the Holy See. These are:

- Holy Places of Palestine - weekend of 13<sup>th</sup> September
- Peter's Pence - weekend of 4<sup>th</sup> October
- World Mission Sunday - weekend of 18<sup>th</sup> October

These three collections must be taken this autumn as they relate to the work of the Holy See (either directly or through the Pontifical Missions Societies). Monies collected for the first two should be sent directly to the Apostolic Nunciature, for the third directly to Missio.

### Donations

Thank you to all those who have continued throughout the pandemic to give so generously to the church. Last Sunday **£305.65** was collected after our Masses and more donations were made through bank transfers.

If you would like to continue giving through direct debit, standing order or bank transfer, the details are below.

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle  
St Wilfrid's  
Sort Code 40-34-20  
Account Number 01164120

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle  
St Joseph's  
Sort Code 40-34-20  
Account Number 31164066

To donate via cheque please make out to  
'DHN St Wilfrid's Gateshead' or 'DHN St Joseph's Gateshead'  
These can be posted to the parish address

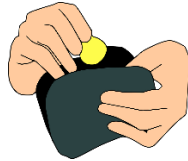
Please use the reference "Weekly Contribution"

We are continuing to raise money for the improvement of the 'Lourdes Garden' at St Joseph's, so far, we have had £310 donated, if you would like to help please use the reference 'Lourdes Garden'

Usually at this time of year **Gift Aid Donation Statements** are issued to those who are part of the scheme, however due to the strange circumstances in which we find ourselves the diocesan offices have decided to only issue such statements at the request of each individual should they want one.

If you are a Gift Aider and would like a statement of your donations you can request one by emailing the Gift Aid Office at:

[gift.aid@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:gift.aid@diocesehn.org.uk) or [michelle.dixon@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:michelle.dixon@diocesehn.org.uk) or  
[andrea.emson@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:andrea.emson@diocesehn.org.uk)



### Re-Opening Churches

Please see the Diocesan Website for information regarding churches which are open.

**St Wilfrid's is to be amongst the churches to reopen in phase 6, in order to do this safely we need as many volunteers as possible, the roles to make the opening a success are varied - cleaners, stewards, ushers.**

**Please give your name and contact details to Canon Michael or to Veronica Georgeson, Health and Safety representative for St Wilfrid's**

The re-opening of St Joseph's for Mass on Sundays has been a great success. There is still no need to pre-book a place as numbers so far have been accommodated with relative ease. Canon Michael will look into reducing the 2metre spacing to 1metre plus in the coming week.

Remember to bring a facemask with you to each Mass, this must be worn throughout the service, **removing it only to receive Holy Communion**. The wearing of a facemask is not only mandatory, but also fulfils Jesus command to 'Love our neighbours' as it is through wearing a mask that we protect others from our germs!

Sanitise your hands; on entry to the church; prior to receiving Communion; and as you exit church.

If you wish to be part of the 'Trace and Track' programme please remember to bring with you an envelope containing your name, contact details, the time and date of your visit. Place this in the box as you enter church, the box will be sealed at the end of the day and only opened if the need arises, otherwise it and all contents will be destroyed, in line with Data Protection, after 21 days.

Please follow the one way system displayed in church and heed the instructions given by the ushers, it will feel strange and over regimented not to be able to attend church in the same way as we used to, but all the guidance is in place for everyone's safety.

In order to comply with government advice, and to maintain a safe environment, we ask that you do not stop to chat with friends as you enter or exit church, keep the system flowing smoothly by keeping any important conversations to be held outdoors at a sensible distance from the exit and entrance routes. Thank you

Please remember that everyone is trying their best to enable Mass to be as welcoming, safe, and comfortable for us all. The precautions in place are necessary, and although the environment is not as we would like it to be we just need to accept it until times change, please do not take out your frustrations on the volunteers who are trying to make a difference.

There will be no collection during Mass, the collection plates will be at the back of church near the exit, please put your donations on the plate as you leave church.

### Volunteers

Thank you to everyone already giving up time to steward and clean St Joseph's church so that it remains open for Sunday Mass. Currently we have just enough to cover Sundays so it is unlikely that the church will open for weekday Mass until more volunteers come forward.

Apart from the Covid cleaning that must be done on Sundays, the church still needs its floors, glass and carpets cleaned regularly. We have a small rota of people to undertake this every 3<sup>rd</sup> week. Please think of giving time on Sundays or adding your name to the normal Church cleaning rota.

If interested please give your name to Canon Michael, Shauna Devitt, or Pat Macgregor.

### Toilet Facilities

Hopefully, we will be re-opening our toilets safely soon thanks to the willingness of volunteers to clean and disinfect them before and after each Mass. You can do your part to help by only using the toilets if absolutely necessary, sanitising your hands before and after use and remembering to shut the toilet lid prior to flushing. Also, we ask that you please use the disinfectant wipes provided to wipe down any place you have touched - flush handle, door handles, taps, sink etc.

Thank you for your continued co-operation and patience