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**BULLETIN B 40 – 29<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2021**  
**22<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

My dear brothers and sisters,

We have all been shocked and deeply saddened by the recent events in Afghanistan. The chaotic scenes at Kabul airport played out on our television screens are unbelievable and unthinkable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The desperation of those trying to leave the country fleeing the Taliban is bad enough, but then yesterday the terrorist attack has taken the situation to a whole new level. The death toll at present is 72 and many injured, but the human cost is far greater. We can do nothing to help these people, except to hold this situation in prayer and to remember that God always wins, that evil never has the last word. Our faith in the Risen Lord Jesus encourages us in times such as this to hold on to God's love and Will.

God bless you all,

Fr. John

**Prayer for Afghanistan**

O God of mercy and of peace,

We hold before you the peoples of Afghanistan.

Be living bread to those who are hungry each day

Be healing and wholeness to those who have no access to health care amidst the ravages of pandemic

Be their true home to all who have been displaced

Be open arms of loving acceptance to those who fear because of their gender, ethnicity, religious or political views

Be peace to those engaged in armed conflict and those who live within its shadow.

Turn our hearts and minds to your ways of just and gentle peace,

Open our eyes to see you in all acts of compassionate care

Strengthen our hearts to step out in solidarity with your suffering people and

Hold us all in your unfailing love.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who emptied himself of all but love in order to bring life in all its fullness.

Amen

**TIMES OF MASS THIS WEEK**

Sun	29	22 <sup>nd</sup> in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass	Anne Ross (RIP)
			1800 Mass	People of the Parish
Tue	31	St Aidan	1900 Mass	Emma Corbyn (RIP)
Wed	1	St Sebba	1000 Mass	Hasledon Family (RIP)
			1030 Adoration	
Thu	2	feria	1000 Mass	Birchall Family (RIP)
			1030 Adoration	
Fri	3	St Gregory the great	1000 Mass	Kay Hill (RIP)
Sun	5	23 <sup>rd</sup> in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass	Jim Birchall (RIP)
			1800 Mass	People of the Parish

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Fr. John will be available to hear confessions in church: - Tue 6.30pm and Thu 10.30am or by appointment. We are now allowed to use the confessional room but face masks are to be worn.

## GOSPEL REFLECTION

There are some signs which we share with the other animals. Cries of pain, or sighs of pleasure, which are a bit like the purring of a cat, are examples. Some physical signs belong to human beings alone: waving our hand, shaking hands, nodding in agreement. Some signs seem more natural than others, so smiling means the same thing all over the world. Other signs are clearly invented, such as the warning sign for radiation, or red for stop and green for go in traffic lights. We can see the use of these signs, but sometimes the signs seem to be for their own sake and it is hard to see what they are signifying.

This is the case with the huge range of symbols, the dietary rules and the elaborate rules for worship in the Jewish world, a world that Jesus was very familiar with. What was the point of these rules and signs? The book of Deuteronomy answers this quite simply. They are signs that God had given the people of Israel so that they would be near to God. Many of the practices seem strange, but they were meant to be strange, unique to Israel, so that by obeying them, the people would retain its identity: an identity which was quite simply being the people of God. Before we start criticising the ancient Jews, we might consider how many symbols we use in our life to mark out the many tribes to which we belong. To be human is to be a symbolic being.

The Old Testament allowed signs but not images. What is the difference between a sign and an image? An image may be a sign, like a traffic sign, but it is not the resemblance that makes it a sign. It is the fact that the sign points to something other than itself that makes it a sign. All the signs of the Old Testament, however odd and demanding they might seem, pointed to God. With the coming of Christ, the signs became irrelevant, because he himself in his humanity was the greatest sign of all, a sign that pointed to God. The humanity of Christ, his human words, human actions and his human birth and death are all one great sign which reveals the presence of God. So the many signs by which Judaism lived became irrelevant. Instead we have Christ. Since his humanity is perceptible to our senses, we use images to represent his humanity. At the same time, Christ is risen into a world beyond our imagination, so we use signs in the sacraments to make the presence of both his humanity and his divinity visible and indeed tangible to us. We can imagine Christ in his earthly life but the resurrection stories make it clear that we can't quite imagine the risen Christ except inasmuch as he allows himself to be seen as an ordinary human being.

This does not mean that the criticism of the Jews in the Gospel does not apply to us. We can use the sacraments while our hearts are far from God, or we can pray and preach but not really allow God to be close. The unclean heart is the heart that does not allow God to enter.

If the humanity of Christ is the prime sign of the presence of God through the incarnation, then our common humanity is the sign of the humanity of Christ. We know his humanity through the humanity of others, especially in their suffering. As the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, says, "For, by his incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each individual" (22).

The sacraments are teaching us to recognise God in our humanity, so that we may see that humanity as it is in God. The sacraments enable us to be nearer to God than the old symbolic life could, because it is God that we touch in touching the humanity of Christ, receiving that humanity into ourselves and with it the divinity. The well-lived sacramental life makes every life precious to us, because every life is an image of God. This is true by nature since God made us in God's own image as rational beings. Yet it is even truer by the fact of the incarnation, as we are shaped in the image of Christ.