

Saint Mary's Newsletter: July

Vicar: David Smithson 027 4213200 Fridays

07 8492761 Afterhours

Lay Minister: Charles Clark 021 02691764

Peoples Warden: Sally-Ann Riddell 022 107562

Vicars Warden: John Heaton 021 702871



SERVICES FOR JULY

Sunday 7th:

10am Holy Communion Service

Refreshments: Majella

Prayers: Majella

Sunday 14th:

10am Holy Communion Service

Refreshments: Trish

Prayers: Trish

Sunday 21st:

10am Holy Communion Service

Refreshments: Melanie

Prayers: Melanie

Sunday 28th:

10am Holy Communion Service

Refreshments: Rosalie

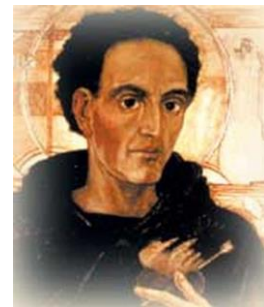
Prayers: Rosalie



Parish Giving

If you are not already doing so, please also consider giving to the parish via Automatic Payment. St Mary's has to pay for our vicar and all other costs of running a Parish, as well as giving a proportion to the Diocese. Please help us to be sustainable by giving via Automatic Payment. It is an easy way to give and is useful for the parish in running its budget. The Parish Bank Account is:

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Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, or watch,
or weep tonight, and give Your angels and saints
charge over those who sleep.

Tend Your sick ones, O Lord Christ.

Rest Your weary ones.

Bless Your dying ones.

Soothe Your suffering ones.

Pity Your afflicted ones.

Shield Your joyous ones, and all for Your love's
sake. Amen.

- Augustine of Hippo -



Self-control is encouraged in the Bible and is listed as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). Exercising self-control essentially entails learning to say “No” to our desires when indulging them would be inappropriate and contrary to God’s design. The need for self-control encompasses both our sinful inclinations and legitimate desires. For instance, sexual desire is a legitimate urge, being part of God’s inherently good creation; however, it must be restrained unless it can be expressed within proper boundaries. In contrast, the desire to steal is an illegitimate urge and is inherently wrong. In both cases, self-control is essential.

Interestingly, while modern culture generally applauds self-control in many aspects of life, it often fails to do so in the context of sexual activity among unmarried adults. The prevailing notion is that, since our sexuality is an integral part of our identity, we need not exercise restraint unless it ventures into illegal territory. However, disregarding God’s boundaries always leads to negative consequences (see Hebrews 13:4). In 1 Corinthians 7:9, Paul says regarding unmarried individuals, “But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” The two biblical options for the unmarried are 1) get married or 2) exercise self-control. Self-control is important in matters of sexuality.

Ironically, contemporary culture is increasingly fixated with sex but rather dismissive of marriage. Recent statistics reveal that “2 in 5 adults think marriage is an outdated tradition” (<https://thrivecenterofpsych.com/blog/millennials-gen-z-marriage-expectations-statistics/>, accessed 4/29/24). With divorces being more newsworthy than good marriages, the situation looks bleak. However, marriage is God’s idea (Genesis 2:24). While some individuals possess the gift of celibacy, our sexual desires inherently point toward a fulfilling covenantal marriage. Marriage is not a quick fix for sexual immorality, but it remains the appropriate context for the expression of our sexuality.

Even in marriage, the virtue of self-control must not be denied. Adultery is a grave sin, often stemming from a lack of self-control. Thus, while Paul acknowledges the challenges of practicing self-control, it remains a fruit that manifests in our lives as we strive to please the Spirit rather than succumbing to our sinful nature.

Exercising self-control yields numerous benefits, not only for the self-controlled person but also for society at large. This reinforces the idea that God’s commandments are for our well-being. Of course, our motivation for exercising self-control isn’t solely based on benefits accrued; it is our goal to become more like Jesus (Romans 8:29).

Everyone, regardless of marital status or life circumstances, must learn self-control. “The grace of God . . . that offers salvation to all people . . . teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age” (Titus 2:11–12).

John Bunyan 1628–1688) was an English tinker, a

Nonconformist Puritan pastor, and the author of over 60 books, including what is without doubt the greatest allegory ever written, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

John Bunyan was born in Elstow, near Bedford, about 45 miles northwest of London, England. He received a rudimentary education and began practicing his father’s trade, tinkering (mending household utensils). Civil war broke out in 1642, and Bunyan joined Oliver Cromwell’s army from 1644 to 1647. In 1648 Bunyan married, and two years later he and his wife had a daughter, Mary, who was born blind.

Bunyan’s wife was a devout Christian, but Bunyan himself was not. He later described himself as “one that took much delight in all manner of vice” (*Grace Abounding*). Influenced by his wife, Bunyan began attending the Anglican church in Elstow, but he continued to struggle with the fact that his sin was overwhelming. He sought out spiritual guidance from John Gifford, a Congregationalist pastor, who pointed him to redemption in Christ. In 1653 Bunyan was baptized in the Ouse River and joined the Bedford Meeting House. Two years later, he was preaching the gospel.

John Bunyan began to write in 1656, starting with a pamphlet opposing the Quakers. In 1658 he wrote *A Few Sighs from Hell*, which criticized the professional clergy and the rich. That tract proved very popular. That same year, his wife died.

In 1659 Bunyan published *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, an exposition of his theology. He also remarried; his second wife’s name was Elizabeth. Meanwhile, the politics in England were changing. The Protestant rebellion failed, and King Charles II returned to power. With Charles’ ascension to the throne came a loss of freedom for unlicensed preachers like Bunyan.

Under Charles II, the only ones allowed to preach in England were Anglican clergy, officially licensed by the state. John Bunyan was not Anglican, and he was not officially licensed. In 1660, ignoring the warnings of friends, Bunyan went to preach at a house church; he was arrested, tried, and jailed in the Bedford prison. The charge against him was that he had “devilishly and perniciously abstained from coming to church to hear divine service” and that he was “a common upholder of several unlawful meetings . . . to the great disturbance and distraction of the good subjects of this kingdom.”

After three months in jail, Bunyan was offered his freedom upon the condition that he give up preaching. He refused the offer and was kept in prison for the next twelve years. Bunyan faced his imprisonment with fortitude, knowing that he was suffering for the cause of Christ, but he sorrowed over the fact that he was not available to provide for his family. He did what he could by making and selling shoelaces in prison. Soon after Bunyan’s arrest, Elizabeth gave birth to a premature baby, who died shortly afterward.

In jail, Bunyan found plenty of time to write. He published several books and tracts from prison, and he worked on many more. In 1662 Parliament passed the Act of Uniformity, which required all churches to use the Book of Common Prayer in their services. Such a law was anathema to Bunyan, who believed that one’s prayers should be from the heart, not prescribed by a book. True to form, he published a booklet on the subject that same year. In 1668 Bunyan began writing *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, a vivid allegory of the spiritual journey of a believer from faith in Christ to his home in heaven.

In 1672 John Bunyan was released from jail. Of course, he immediately resumed preaching and carrying out his other responsibilities as the pastor of Bedford Meeting House. His preaching attracted much attention. The church grew, and people came from all over the region to hear him teach the Word. And he continued writing.

In 1675 John Bunyan was arrested and jailed again, this time only for about six months. His release was facilitated by the famed theologian John Owen, working in conjunction with some influential people in London. In 1678 *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Part 1, was published. It was an immediate bestseller, going through thirteen different printings in Bunyan’s lifetime.

In August 1688, Bunyan travelled on horseback to visit a family in need and to preach in London. He was caught in a rainstorm on the way and developed a fever. Bunyan died several days later; he was buried in the Nonconformist burial ground at Bunhill Fields.

