

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## Being part of the body

*John 6:56-69*

We have a confirmation service at the prison where I work this Sunday. There will be thirteen individuals who will be confirmed.

Throughout our preparation for the confirmation service, we have talked about the Church of England, as well as the wider Christian church and how as Christians we are part of something much bigger than just our little service on a Sunday morning. Prisons are isolated places hidden away from the public gaze behind high walls or fences. Society in general does not often think about those people who are locked away, yet we know that the eucharist that is received in our prisons is the same eucharist received in our parish churches across Lancashire. Jesus is as present in the lives of those in prison as he is in the lives of those in our communities.

In this Sunday's gospel, Jesus is challenging his disciples to accept his difficult teaching about 'eating his flesh and drinking his blood.' It is gruesome imagery, yet this is the eucharist that most of us partake in regularly, in beautiful churches, using shiny chalices. 'Eating' and 'drinking', of course, mean more to Jesus than simply ingesting some bread and wine, they are images of sharing in the life of Jesus, including his willingness to go to the cross.

It is as hard for us to take this on board in modern times as it was for his disciples. 'Eating' and 'drinking', 'believing' and 'knowing' are not abstract concepts, they are challenging instructions to share in Christ's death as a means of sharing his life. It is through his physical death that we have access to new life.

Jesus, of course, did not deliver this lesson without also giving hope. Jesus is clear. All those who have overcome the offence of his teaching and can say, as Peter does: "We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" can only do so because God has first drawn them. God draws us all to Godself and we can be thankful God is still drawing people in. Whether in prison, in the parishes of our Diocese or anywhere in the world, we can be part of the body of Christ, fully and completely, because God welcomes us in.

**Rev Calum Crombie, Managing HMP Chaplain**

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES