

# Sixth Sunday of the Year

Well, here is an encouragement not to diet!

In this Sunday's second reading Paul tells us

*Whatever you eat, whatever you drink,  
whatever you do at all,  
do it for the glory of God.*

It is an insight that reminds us that every aspect of life can be seen to have God's mark upon it. The beauty of the world, all that we hear, see, smell, touch and taste are all part of God's bounty. For all the many gifts that have been sent our way we should be grateful and give thanks and glory to God.

At the same time Paul is not advising that we can overindulge, making ourselves ill, forgetting those who have little or nothing, ignoring those who hunger and thirst.

We shall soon begin Lent and we recall that giving something up is not just an exercise to show we are strong-willed. Moderating anything in our lives is to prompt us to give more time to God, to do good and shift our attention towards the needy.

It's also wise to look at the rest of Saint Paul's letter to find out what else he is writing about. He imagines a person invited to dinner and there being meat on the table.

In those times it was possible to buy the meat of animals that had been offered in pagan sacrifices, so he is looking at whether a Christian should question the source of the food.

Paul says if no one mentions where the meat came from then the Christian guest can eat with a clear conscience – the host hasn't made an issue of it. If, however, the host chooses to explain that the meat was from a sacrificed animal then Paul advises not to eat the meat.

It's not because the meat is somehow contaminated or tainted. Paul has no problem eating the meat of animals sacrificed to gods he does not believe in. The issue is what the others at table will think. They might imagine that a Christian is happy to share in pagan sacrifices and in some way share the beliefs of those who made the offering.

Paul puts his finger on an important point. We may be able to do all kinds of things in good conscience and yet on some occasions it can be wrong to indulge our inclinations.

I might enjoy a good party as long as I don't overdo it. But it is also important to gauge how others are going to be influenced. I may like a glass of wine but I should think twice about what I drink if there is someone present who has a weakness.

Don't buy a bar of chocolate named after a planet for someone the size of a planet – even if they would be over the moon. And don't torture them by eating one in front of them either!

