

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

2nd June 2020

Tuesday of the 9th Week in Ordinary Time

(Eleventh Tuesday of Isolation)

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Thanks to those who replied to my last scripture reflection with your own thoughts – if you want to be taken off the email list, or know anyone who may appreciate the contact, please let me know – or print it for a neighbour. (If you have only just started to receive these daily reflections it is because I have only just found your address, sorry) Thanks. Fr Peter.

Messages from Fr Peter: Please pray for Chris Taylor – she is very poorly
Pope Francis' homily on Pentecost Sunday has enlightening messages about being a parish community and about living a disciples in this pandemic time. I have copied it at the end of this edition today for you.

(Daily Scripture is available from www.universalis.com)

2 Peter 3:11-15. 17-18

You should be living holy and saintly lives while you wait and long for the Day of God to come, when the sky will dissolve in flames and the elements melt in the heat. What we are waiting for is what he promised: the new heavens and new earth, the place where righteousness will be at home. So then, my friends, while you are waiting, do your best to live lives without spot or stain so that he will find you at peace. Think of our Lord's patience as your opportunity to be saved. You have been warned about this, my friends; be careful not to get carried away by the errors of unprincipled people, from the firm ground that you are standing on. Instead, go on growing in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory, in time and in eternity. Amen.

Mark 12:13-17

The chief priests and the scribes and the elders sent to Jesus some Pharisees and some Herodians to catch him out in what he said. These came and said to him, 'Master, we know you are an honest man, that you are not afraid of anyone, because a man's rank means nothing to you, and that you teach the way of God in all honesty. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay, yes or no?' Seeing through their hypocrisy he said to them, 'Why do you set this trap for me? Hand me a denarius and let me see it.' They handed him one and he said, 'Whose head is this? Whose name?' 'Caesar's' they told him. Jesus said to them, 'Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God.' This reply took them completely by surprise.

(What is God saying to you as you hear his Word here?)

Because of the way we have come out of the Easter period our weekday readings have landed at the end of the letters of St Peter – the end of his second letter. This does not stop us remembering that these early Christians are, like us, getting used to what Jesus has asked of them / us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

However strong our faith we know what parts of our faith are more important than others, but this does not stop us from being distracted to some of the distractions available. Jesus had promised his followers that he would return in glory. But something had remained deep in their "something" that he would come back in glory very soon. Imagine how this could concentrate your mind – and away from just living faith! It became clear that, especially after the killing of Stephen, various executions and Christians just dying, that this may have been a misunderstanding. But when such feelings are planted they can lead to automatic responses ("Why bother proclaiming the Lord to others – he's due back soon!"), or obsessions ("Jesus is coming soon, what will it be like? Should I book my holiday or would it be wrong? Etc)

This is the message Peter is trying to confront in this part of his letter. He does not say that Jesus would not come in glory in the next two weeks – but he is pointing to more important responses to living the life Jesus had given them. What matters, he says, is not preparing for

a that moment by being somewhere, wearing something special, having the house tidy, but learning to live as Jesus had taught them and trusting in Jesus' Spirit. So we hear:

"Live holy and saintly lives..."

"Live lives... so that he will find you at peace..."

"go on growing in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ."

And that's it, says Peter.

Since the start of the "time of the Spirit" they, and we, have all that we need to live in hope – But how distracted we can be by "twinkling" extras which have cropped up over the years, even in the church (I'm not suggesting you do this but I'm sure you have seen distraction questions like this on the internet!)

In the Gospel today we find the religious leaders trying to trick Jesus (it may be a "distraction issue" for Pharisees) by asking a question. Jesus says, more or less, Why are you asking me this, when there are much more important things to speak of? "Hand me a coin....". Jesus suggests that they have the ability to think the right questions and not the distractions. It is interesting that we can spend more time on distractions than just living the important things in life.

There is a story of a monastery in the hills. One day a young and recently arrived brother was playing chess with an old and holy brother. Half way through the quiet game the young man asks the old brother: "Brother, if you realised that the Lord was to come again in glory in five minute's time, what would you do: go to confession, pray in chapel, read the Gospel?" The old monk replied: "If I knew this was to happen.... I would finish this game of chess with you, brother".

Pope Francis announced a year to reflect on “Laudato Si” after Covid-19

24th May 2020 – 24th May 2021

“Today is also the fifth anniversary of the Encyclical Laudato si’, with which I sought to draw attention to the cry of the earth and of the poor. Thanks to the initiative of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, the “Laudato si’ Week” we have just celebrated will blossom into a special Year of the anniversary of Laudato si’, a special year to reflect on the Encyclical, from 24 May this year until 24 May next year. I invite all people of good will to join in, to take care of our common home and our most fragile brothers and sisters. The prayer dedicated to this Year will be published on the site. It will be good to pray it.”

“I wish you all a good Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch and arrivederci.”



Prayer for the special year of the anniversary of *Laudato si’*

Loving God, Creator of Heaven, Earth, and all therein contained.

Open our minds and touch our hearts,

so that we can be part of Creation, your gift.

Be present to those in need in these difficult times,

especially the poorest and most vulnerable.

Help us to show creative solidarity

as we confront the consequences of the global pandemic.

Make us courageous in embracing

the changes required to seek the common good.

Now more than ever, may we all feel interconnected and interdependent.

Enable us to succeed in listening and responding

to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.

May their current sufferings become the birth-pangs

of a more fraternal and sustainable world.

We pray through Christ our Lord,

under the loving gaze of Mary Help of Christians, Amen.

PARISH NOTICES:

- **Know any parishioners housebound or who may need contacting?** - At the start of this lockdown a number of parishioners offered to find a way of being help to those parishioners who are in need or just housebound. Many people are in contact with the parish through this email or the WhatsApp group, but you may think of some who are not getting parish contacts – but they may get family support and food. If you have suggestions please email their names and addresses to the parish address and we can get parishioners to drop a message in to them. Thanks.
- **Local COVID19 Helplines** *(Official message from our Parish Organisers)*
The Wyre Council have a dedicated helpline for COVID19 isolation support. If you are struggling to get essential items, or need help, please ring 01253 891000 and select OPTION 7 when prompted. Alternatively, if you have access to the internet, you can fill in the online request for help here: https://www.wyre.gov.uk/forms/form/257/en/coronavirus_isolation_support_form

There is also another local network being organised by the Methodist Church - called POULTONCAN. The helpline there is 01253 670800 between 8am and 10pm, 7 days a week.

We have a group of parish volunteers who are going to be working with the council to respond to requests. If anyone would like to offer help, please email Jenny at jennifer.hillman.sutcliffe@gmail.com or telephone on 07568502749.

- **Parish WhatsApp Group:** Emily Halliwell (as part of the above group) has set up a closed parish WhatsApp account. I have finally been beaten into joining but am a bit of a WhatsApp virgin as yet! Emily says: “My number is 07969643648 if you want to be added just reply with your mobile number or text me. “
- **Local Bakery Offer:** Jane and Andrew Neal, who are always so generous to us by offering bread and cakes at parish social events, are offering delivered bakery goods to those who are in isolation or ill.

However they also offer a “click-and -collect” service (You can stop outside the shop in Cleveleys) for those who have transport. You can order on line at [neals-familybakery.co.uk](https://www.neals-familybakery.co.uk)

- Lancashire and South Cumbria website for current details on Hospitals & Corana Virus
<https://www.healthierlsc.co.uk/coronavirus>

Thoughts contributed by Virus Times’ readers:

(A few of anonymous responses from these Virus Times Reflections from our parishioners: Thanks to contributors.)

Just been Spirit Filled : through following our Pentecost Sunday Mass .
I was struck (Holy Spirit ?) by a phrase the priest used in his homily “the Acts Don’t end :they stop in order that we carry on the Discipleship for our time”
Happy Pentecost to us all!

This Morning at St Peter’s Hazel Grove the Mass readings were in Arabic and all bidding Prayers of which there were many languages from all over the world. It was quite a moving experience.

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Various Older People we worry about	Whilst we are enjoying the promise of loosening lockdown we still have concerns for relations and friends who have signs of Covid-19 and who have been taken to Hospital. Please pray for these people – and for those we don’t know as well.
	Jen Hillman’s Gran who has died
Lyn Reynolds	Nana or mother-in-law to Jacinta and Michelle. In the Vic - Not diagnosed with Covid-19 but with similar breathing issues. Prayers please
Chris Taylor	Chris’ son, David has asked for your prayers for her at this time as she is very poorly
John (and family)	Family friend of Emma who has died aged 49
Louie aged 13	The neighbour of a parishioner who has Leukaemia who is having a sudden set back. Prayer, please
From Jayne Clark	Could I please ask that our parishioners pray for all the staff in children’s social care who are still working to safeguard children in our area and around the country. It never ceases to amaze me how hard they work generally, despite the abuse that they often are subjected to, but more so currently given the extra risk that they are putting themselves under to visit the vulnerable.
Maureen O’Connell & Family(Not Covid-19)	Mrs Donnelly’s Mum
Paul Sharrock (Not Covid-19) (and family: Kathryn, Mary & Rachael)	Your prayer of healing for Paul is remarkable –Paul has been moved to a hospital nearer his family – we hope he can see them. <i>Fr Peter</i>
House-locked Parishioners	Who are worried and missing family
Parents home schooling AND home job-ing	Thank God for our parents
Our Teachers	Who are at school or preparing work for our children
Luke (not Covid-19) Died Yesterday	A young man recently married into a family I know in Australia, aged 30. (Fr Peter)
Hugh (Not Covid-19)	The brother of Emma, a friend of mine (Fr Peter), who has been found to have cancer only recently. He has three young children. Prayers Please

Pope Francis' Homily on Pentecost Sunday:

"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:4), as the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians. He continues: "There are different forms of service, but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone" (vv. 5- 6). Diversity and unity: St. Paul puts together two words that seem contradictory. He wants to tell us that the Holy Spirit is the one who brings together the many; and that the Church was born this way: we are all different, yet united by the same Holy Spirit.



Let us go back to the origin of the Church, to the day of Pentecost. Let us look at the Apostles: some of them were fishermen, simple people accustomed to living by the work of their hands, but there were also others, like Matthew, who was an educated tax collector. They were from different backgrounds and social contexts, and they had Hebrew and Greek names. In terms of character, some were meek and others were excitable; they all had different ideas and sensibilities. They were all different. Jesus did not change them; he did not make them into a set of pre-packaged models. He left their differences and now he unites them by anointing them with the Holy Spirit. The union comes with the anointing. At Pentecost, the Apostles understand the unifying power of the Spirit. They see it with their own eyes when everyone, though speaking in different languages, comes together as one people: the people of God, shaped by the Spirit, who weaves unity from diversity and bestows harmony because there is harmony in the Spirit. He himself is harmony.

Let us now focus on ourselves, the Church of today. We can ask ourselves: "What is it that unites us, what is the basis of our unity?" We too have our differences, for example: of opinions, choices, sensibilities. But the temptation is always fiercely to defend our ideas, believing them to be good for everybody and agreeing only with those who think as we do. And that's a bad temptation that divides. But this is a faith created in our own image; it is not what the Spirit wants. We might think that what unite us are our beliefs and our morality. But there is much more: our principle of unity is the Holy Spirit. He reminds us that first of all we are God's beloved children, all the same, in this, and all different. The Spirit comes to us, in our differences and difficulties, to tell us that we have one Lord — Jesus — and one Father, and that for this reason we are brothers and sisters! Let us begin anew from here; let us look at the Church with the eyes of the Spirit and not as the world does. The world sees us only as on the right or left, with this ideology, with that one; the Spirit sees us as sons and daughters of the Father and brothers and sisters of Jesus. The world sees conservatives and progressives; the Spirit sees children of God. A worldly gaze sees structures to be made more efficient; a spiritual gaze sees brothers and sisters pleading for mercy. The Spirit loves us and knows everyone's place in the grand scheme of things: for him, we are not bits of confetti blown about by the wind, rather we are irreplaceable fragments in his mosaic.

If we go back to the day of Pentecost, we discover that the first task of the Church is proclamation. Yet we see that the Apostles do not prepare a strategy; when they were shut in there, in the Upper Room, they did not make a strategy, no, they do not prepare a pastoral plan. They could have divided people into groups according to their roots, speaking first to those close by and then to those far away... They could have also waited a while before beginning their preaching in order to understand more deeply the teachings of Jesus, so as to avoid risks... No. The Spirit does not want the memory of the Master to be cultivated in small groups locked in upper rooms where it is easy to "nest." And this is a bad disease that can come to the Church: the Church not as a community, not as a family, not as a mother, but as a nest. He opens doors and pushes us to press beyond what has already been said and done, beyond the precincts of a timid and wary faith. In the world, unless there is tight organization and a clear strategy, things fall apart. In the Church, however, the Spirit guarantees unity to those who proclaim the message. The Apostles set off: unprepared, yet putting their lives on the line. One thing kept them going: the desire to give what they received. The beginning of the First Letter of John is beautiful: "What we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you" (1 John 1:3).

Here we come to understand what the secret of unity is, the secret of the Spirit. It is gift. For the Spirit himself is gift: he lives by giving himself and in this way he keeps us together, making us sharers in the same gift. It is important to believe that God is gift, that he acts not by taking away, but by giving. Why is this important? Because our way of being believers depends on how we understand God. If we have in mind a God who takes away and imposes himself, we too will want to take away and impose ourselves: occupying spaces, demanding recognition, seeking power. But if we have in our hearts a God who is gift, everything changes. If we realize that what we are is his gift, free and unmerited, then we too will want to make our lives a gift. By loving

humbly, serving freely and joyfully, we will offer to the world the true image of God. The Spirit, the living memory of the Church, reminds us that we are born from a gift and that we grow by giving: not by holding on but by giving of ourselves.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us look within and ask ourselves what prevents us from giving ourselves. There are, let us say, three enemies of the gift — the main ones, three — always lurking at the door of our hearts: narcissism, victimhood and pessimism. Narcissism makes us idolize ourselves, to be concerned only with what is good for us. The narcissist thinks: “Life is good if I profit from it.” So he or she ends up saying: “Why should I give myself to others?” In this time of pandemic, how wrong narcissism is: the tendency to think only of our own needs, to be indifferent to those of others, and not to admit our own frailties and mistakes. But the second enemy, victimhood, is equally dangerous. Victims complain every day about their neighbour: “No one understands me, no one helps me, no one loves me, everyone has it in for me!” The victim’s heart is closed, as he or she asks, “Why aren’t others concerned about me?” In the crisis we are experiencing, how ugly victimhood is! Thinking that no one understands us and experiences what we experience. Finally, there is pessimism. Here the unending complaint is: “Nothing is going well, society, politics, the Church...” The pessimist gets angry with the world, but sits back and does nothing, thinking: “What good is giving? That is useless.” At this moment, in the great effort of beginning anew, how damaging is pessimism, the tendency to see everything in the worst light and to keep saying that nothing will return as before! When someone thinks this way, the one thing that certainly does not return is hope. In these three — the narcissistic idol of the mirror, the ‘mirror-god;’ ‘I feel like a person with grievances;’ and the ‘god-negativity,’ ‘everything is black, everything is dark’ — we find ourselves in the famine of hope and we need to appreciate the gift of life, the gift that each of us is. Therefore we need the Holy Spirit, God’s gift that heals us from narcissism, victimhood and pessimism, heals us from the mirror, from grievances and darkness.

Brothers and sister, let us pray to him: Holy Spirit, memory of God, revive in us the memory of the gift received. Free us from the paralysis of selfishness and awaken in us the desire to serve, to do good. Even worse than this crisis is the tragedy of squandering it by closing in on ourselves. Come, Holy Spirit: you are harmony; make us builders of unity. You always give yourself; grant us the courage to go out of ourselves, to love and help each other, in order to become one family. Amen