

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

27th June 2020

Saturday of the 12th week of Ordinary Time

(*Fourteenth Saturday of Isolation*)

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com



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.

Note from Fr Peter: A full list of Deanery church opening (which have been sent to me) are below

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

Lamentations 2:10-14.18-19

*The Lord has pitilessly destroyed
all the homes of Jacob;
in his displeasure he has shattered
the strongholds of the daughter of Judah;
he has thrown to the ground,
he has left accursed the kingdom and its rulers.
Mutely they sit on the ground,
the elders of the daughter of Zion;
they have put dust on their heads,
and wrapped themselves in sackcloth.
The virgins of Jerusalem hang their heads
down to the ground.
My eyes wasted away with weeping,
my entrails shuddered,
my liver spilled on the ground
at the ruin of the daughters of my people,
as children, mere infants, fainted
in the squares of the Citadel.
They kept saying to their mothers,
'Where is the bread?'
as they fainted like wounded men
in the squares of the City,
as they poured out their souls
on their mothers' breasts.
How can I describe you, to what compare you,
daughter of Jerusalem?
Who can rescue and comfort you,
virgin daughter of Zion?
For huge as the sea is your affliction;
who can possibly cure you?
The visions your prophets had on your behalf
were delusive, tinsel things,
they never pointed out your sin,
to ward off your exile.
The visions they proffered you were false,
fallacious, misleading.
Cry aloud, then, to the Lord,
groan, daughter of Zion;
let your tears flow like a torrent,
day and night;
give yourself no relief,
grant your eyes no rest.
Up, cry out in the night-time,*

*in the early hours of darkness;
pour your heart out like water
before the Lord.
Stretch out your hands to him
for the lives of your children
who faint with hunger
at the entrance to every street.*

Psalm 73

*Why, O God, have you cast us off for ever?
Why blaze with anger at the sheep of your pasture?
Remember your people whom you chose long ago,
the tribe you redeemed to be your own possession,
the mountain of Zion where you made your dwelling.
Do not forget your poor servants for ever.
Turn your steps to these places that are utterly ruined!
The enemy has laid waste the whole of the sanctuary.
Your foes have made uproar in your house of prayer:
they have set up their emblems, their foreign emblems,
high above the entrance to the sanctuary.
Do not forget your poor servants for ever.
Their axes have battered the wood of its doors.
They have struck together with hatchet and pickaxe.
O God, they have set your sanctuary on fire:
they have razed and profaned the place where you dwell.
Do not forget your poor servants for ever.
Remember your covenant; every cave in the land
is a place where violence makes its home.
Do not let the oppressed return disappointed;
let the poor and the needy bless your name.*

Matthew 8:5-17

*When Jesus went into Capernaum a centurion came up and pleaded with him. 'Sir,' he said 'my servant is lying at home paralysed, and in great pain.' 'I will come myself and cure him' said Jesus. The centurion replied, 'Sir, I am not worthy to have you under my roof; just give the word and my servant will be cured. For I am under authority myself, and have soldiers under me; and I say to one man: Go, and he goes; to another: Come here, and he comes; to my servant: Do this, and he does it.' When Jesus heard this he was astonished and said to those following him, 'I tell you solemnly, nowhere in Israel have I found faith like this. And I tell you that many will come from east and west to take their places with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of heaven; but the subjects of the kingdom will be turned out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.' And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go back, then; you have believed, so let this be done for you.' And the servant was cured at that moment.
And going into Peter's house Jesus found Peter's mother-in-law in bed with fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.
That evening they brought him many who were possessed by devils. He cast out the spirits with a word and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah:
He took our sicknesses away and carried our diseases for us.*

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

Since working with teenagers I have continued, often, to ask people “when have you felt close to God?” Even as a Christian I am continually amazed by the number of people who’s first answer is that they felt closest to God at the death of a loved one. Some people come to the death of a loved one by being angry with God – but, perhaps, a bigger reality will always lead us to someone who has a wider answer? Whatever it is disaster, worry, lack of answers comes to us all at times – it would be worth spending a moment reminding ourselves how that felt and what we did in faith response. (I think it is a telling moment when Jesus asks the disciples if they are, also, leaving him: Peter answers “Who can we go to. You have the message of eternal life”.) Coming to Jesus because we have nowhere else to go may seem a bit like ‘putting on him’ or ‘rolling dice’ but, scripturally, it seems good enough faith for God! This is

a reminder of why it is important that we join with others in their family funerals – even though we do not know them. Leave the dead with God, but the family need your faith witness!

With our own experience of disaster in mind we come to today's quick touch on the Book of Lamentations. It is a short book of five poems which were written after and about the worst thing that could have happened (the destruction of the Temple and the Exile of God's people) and where it leaves the relationship between God and his people. As you can see from the text the people are very much aware of their neglect of God, their sin, but are trying to let God know they are turning around ('Repentance' means 'doing a u turn') These poems are liturgical and were sung in the ruins of the Temple after the people returned to Jerusalem and are still used on the feast of the destruction of both Temples. They are re-discovering God whilst weeping at the funeral of the Temple and all it signifies to them.

This whole affair has allowed the Israelites to acknowledge their neglect of God and that what has happened was promised by God. God has judged his people – but the miracle is that the people recognised that in being judged there is still HOPE – because GOD IS STILL IN CHARGE! You can almost hear the weeping people saying: "God is still in charge and he is the only one we have!" When we all look back over our history there are things which we, as a community, weep at – because we all need to lament the effects of our communal sinfulness. Like the Jews sing these sad poems each year to remember their sin which destroyed the Temple, so we have some days to remember our communal sin – which are they? Should there be more of these, rather than just victory days, to remember sad truths about my communal sin in the past? (slavery, sexism, child abuse, what else?) We may well risk discovering that God is still in charge!

A note from St Matthew: We know lots of Gospel stories where people are going through painful, life changing, situations. Spending time with the lamenting Israelites gives new insight into how Jesus was experienced when he healed and dealt with the poorest and those who lacked faith. Read this Gospel with the Israelites in mind. Ultimately we meet, in Jesus, the God who is still in charge as we are told:

*This was to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah:
He took our sicknesses away and carried our diseases for us.*

(If you have read this please read Pope Francis' message which has just been sent to me by a parishioner. Nice to know the Pope agrees with you, isn't it!)

SATURDAY, JUNE 27, 2020

"Prayer gives us nobility. It is capable of securing our relationship with God who is the true Companion on the journey of every man and woman, in the midst of life's thousand adversities; good or bad, but always prayer: Thank you, Lord. I am afraid, Lord. Help me, Lord. Forgive me, Lord. Because the nobility of prayer leaves us in God's hands. Those hands wounded by love: the only sure hands we have."

Pope Francis

Instagram (@franciscus) JUNE 24, 2020

PARISH NOTICES:

- *To date the Fylde coast has seen 1,819 COVID-positive patients with 18 patients currently being treated as inpatients. As of 5pm on **June 19th**, the Trust had reported 223 deaths. A total of 408 patients from across the Fylde coast have been discharged.*

- **Re-opening of St John's Church for private prayer**

St John's is to be open from 11.00am to 1.00pm on Wednesdays and Saturdays with the agreed arrangements and a limited number of people – great thanks to Cath Morgan and our volunteer stewards.

Please note that, if you come you will have to declare you are not in a vulnerable sector of society and that you have no flu-like symptoms. Please remember all the descriptions below are for the safety of OTHERS as well as you.

Due to the 2 metre distancing there will be a maximum number entering at any time and individuals must enter and sit apart ("Households" can stay together)

There will be an indicated "One way" route around church to the exit.

Parish Stewards will guide you to hand sanitiser and benches

Benches will be sanitised after each use.

There will be no books provided – please bring your own prayer aids.

We are not allowed to provide toilet facilities.

We are not allowed anything which is openly "devotional" (gatherings of people, shared prayer, etc) or items which can be touched (relics, votive candles etc)

If you wish to wear a mask please provide your own.

If you have flu-like symptoms, or are in a "vulnerable" category please stay at home.

St Martin & Hilda's open for private prayer

Our chapel will be open for private prayer on Wednesdays from **9.30am to 12.30pm** from next week.

Great thanks to Joan Swan for organising this under the safeguarding guidelines of the Church of England and the responsibility of the Vicar of St Chad's.

If you wish to offer any help please contact Joan on 07887 880497

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

**Opening Times of churches
within our Deanery:**

St John’s, Poulton will be open:
Wednesdays 11.00am – 1.00pm
Saturdays 11.00am – 1.00pm

Ss Hilda & Martin’s Chapel:
Wednesdays 9.30am – 12.30pm

St Wulstan's Fleetwood: will be open:
10.00am -12.00noon on
Monday, Wednesday and Friday
14.00pm -18.00pm on
Tuesday and Thursday

St. Teresas Cleveleys: will be open:
Saturdays 10 am - 12 noon
Wednesdays 10 am - 12 noon

Sacred Heart, Thornton
Fridays 11am-12noon
Sundays 11am-12noon

St Mary’s, Fleetwood: (No information)

English Martyrs’, Hardhorn:
Not opening for Private Prayer

Thoughts contributed by Virus Times' readers:

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

You mentioned that many don't see the relevance of the Old Testament. Perhaps that is because they have been given a narrow view of history, the sort often badly taught at school, dates, kings and big events. Your descriptions of history of course necessitate using all those things to provide context but the beauty for me is that you get to the heart of history - that is making sense of it all, understanding and relaying the human condition. What the people were thinking, and why, gives a richness to their actions. Crucially, Father, your gift is to further explain how these human experiences were in many ways secondary to the main purpose of the Old (and New) Testament and that is to reveal the Word of God. Now it is starting to make sense to me and in a way that I believe it can be understood by putting us, the reader, into the shoes of the Israelites to whom God reveals his wishes. The same messages, before Christ, now gain relevance for us as much as the New Testament. So for me the lockdown has turned into something of a retreat. Scripture development for sure but like either ends of a bookcase my mind is constantly drawn to two prayers in the Mass.....in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and what I HAVE FAILED TO DO.....and my favourite prayer 'Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed'.

Re Bony M 1978. 1978 was a fabulous year for me, the only blot was that awful song, Rivers of Babylon. Roll forward 42 years and I think it's fresh, tuneful and of course biblical, I love it. Does that mean I have become wiser with age, or was I always an opinionated so-and-so?

Thank you again for the sensitive and understanding approach to the importance of the Temple for the Jewish people.

It struck me what an enormous intellectual, emotional and spiritual leap that Paul had to make when he wrote: "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" 1 Corinthians 6:19 The brand-new temple that had just recently been completed was for Paul, who was in his own words one of the strictest adherents of the Jewish Law, now redundant.

As you remind us, at the death of Jesus, the curtain in the Temple that kept all the people separate from entering the Holy of Holies was torn apart. For Paul, we now are no longer have the need for a place where we can find God - because it is "in God that we live and move and have our being."

Jesus says it in another way: "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

Has the lockdown enabled us to begin to grasp in a deeper way this understanding? If it has then, when we return to the church building, we will recognise God as present in his people who are gathered, at the invitation of Jesus, to take part in an act of thanksgiving (a Eucharist) to God the Father for what Jesus has made possible. We will then have reached the great understanding that Paul expressed so vividly: we are indeed the temples of the Holy Spirit.

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Maureen Brown	Maureen was taken into Victoria after a couple of 'incident'. She slept well last night, has had a 'clear' and is speaking better today. I am sure she will appreciate our prayers. I have sent your love to her.
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.
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 now been moved to a specialised rehabilitation hospital where more serious physiotherapy can be offered and better connection with his family which has been very painful during lockdown. Please remember his wife & family at this time. <i>Fr Peter</i>
Parents home schooling AND home job-ing	Thank God for our parents
Our Teachers	Who are at school or preparing work for our children
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

