

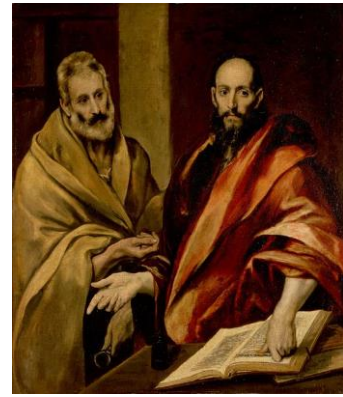
St John the Evangelist, Poulton

28th June 2020

Feast of Ss Peter & Paul

(Fifteenth Sunday 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)

Acts 12:1-11

King Herod started persecuting certain members of the Church. He beheaded James the brother of John, and when he saw that this pleased the Jews he decided to arrest Peter as well. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread, and he put Peter in prison, assigning four squads of four soldiers each to guard him in turns. Herod meant to try Peter in public after the end of Passover week. All the time Peter was under guard the Church prayed to God for him unremittingly.

On the night before Herod was to try him, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, fastened with double chains, while guards kept watch at the main entrance to the prison. Then suddenly the angel of the Lord stood there, and the cell was filled with light. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him. 'Get up!' he said 'Hurry!' – and the chains fell from his hands. The angel then said, 'Put on your belt and sandals.' After he had done this, the angel next said, 'Wrap your cloak round you and follow me.' Peter followed him, but had no idea that what the angel did was all happening in reality; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed through two guard posts one after the other, and reached the iron gate leading to the city. This opened of its own accord; they went through it and had walked the whole length of one street when suddenly the angel left him. It was only then that Peter came to himself. 'Now I know it is all true' he said. 'The Lord really did send his angel and has saved me from Herod and from all that the Jewish people were so certain would happen to me.'

2 Letter of Paul to Timothy

My life is already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to be gone. I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith; all there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his Appearing.

The Lord stood by me and gave me power, so that through me the whole message might be proclaimed for all the pagans to hear; and so I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from all evil attempts on me, and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Matthew 16:13-18

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said 'the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.' Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

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

So Peter and Paul – put your hand up if you have to share your patron feast with someone else? But saints are important – not so that we can say “it’s good to know someone can be a saint because it means I don’t need to be!” and like buses, today they come along in.... well two’s. Notice I didn’t say ‘pairs’, because there is no way these two are a pair – they are very different and I can’t imagine they ever went on holiday together! But that’s the point. They both come with a caricature: One is a stereotypical fiery Galilean who was a fisherman, the other a self-confident Pharisee who, though very bright, came with a degree in tent-making. I often wonder what Jesus’ mother really thought of his choice of friends?

But the point of today’s feast is not who these two men are – but who they became. And even though they both had a memorable invitation from Jesus to follow him they were both very different people as they grew in discipleship.

The first message these two disciples bring to us is that we have to start with how we have been created by God. We are all different and that’s good! There is NO template for holiness which can be found in our genes. In a very simple way Peter looks after the local Church, the Jewish converts in and around Jerusalem. Paul looks outwards firstly to take this new revelation of God firstly to the Jews, and then the Greeks and Romans in far-away places – he then appointed leaders, kept in touch with them and supported them. This reminds us that we, too, have a ministry to both the Church locally and to Evangelise in places we may never see. Both Peter & Paul have a special place for the poor in their work. One of the things the Pandemic has done for us is remind us of how big the world is and how the Church is alive in places we never knew – and very alive! Many people visit other parts of the world to watch Mass streamed to home – it helps us to both appreciate our parish community but also avoid being over ‘parochial’ in being Church.

That’s what these two men teach us by their difference. But how they grow is something they share. They both had a call from Jesus ‘*follow me*’, ‘*why are you persecuting me*’. But they did not become ‘expert disciples’ just because of this call.

Peter, as we know, has some fantastic moments in the Gospels – but also times when he seems to stumble along (I have added the second part of that Gospel passage as whoever chose the readings wanted to be too kind!). But by the time we come to the Acts of the Apostles we do well to ask: “How does Peter know how to respond to this frightening imprisonment with such calm, hope and faith?”. Well he has learned how to be a disciple from being with Jesus, praying with the Father and being with the other disciples. (I have just had an insight that when Jesus told them to be “Fishers of men” Peter probably said “Stop it!”) He is much more than just a fisherman now!

Paul has a history which must have held him back. After his conversion to Jesus he went away for some years to ‘sort his head out’ before coming back to start his travels. His manner could be off putting at first (and maybe always was). He discovered his gifts were in teaching (Transferable skills from his previous work), starting Church communities and appointing elders so that he could go on to another place (Though the people were very fond of Paul and really grateful for bringing the Good News of Jesus, they probably were happy when he left them for somewhere else – remember when you were coming home for holidays from

college: “nice to see you. When are you going back?). But then visit the second reading from his second letter to Timothy (We saw this after Easter didn’t we?). Here is a man at the end of his life who is speaking about who he has become through his discipleship and being open to the Spirit of God. His faith has become a part of his very self – it is not an addition like ‘Oh I can make tents, too!

And so today we celebrate two very different men who learned to work alongside Jesus – Peter whilst Jesus was ministering in Palestine, but both of them working alongside Jesus in their own ministry. They learned how to grow from their lack of experience and faith to being people who quite naturally lived their faith in Jesus who was the centre of their lives. They allowed Jesus to be the blood that flowed through them so that they oozed faith and witness – it was not a label or just one of the many areas of their lives. The point of celebrating these two is that they are telling all those they preach to – and us – that we can do it too. Faith in Jesus can become ‘natural,’ ‘second nature,’ ‘part of everything we do’ – its not a ‘holy bit’ of our lives. I think many Catholics have discovered this over lockdown from Mass. It may have been a shock to us – but, hopefully, a useful shock – like Peter finding himself in prison and wondering whether this was why he really became a disciple?

I was speaking to someone yesterday about how we felt when we first got behind the wheel of a car and drove too slowly down a road with six cars behind being very patient – or not!. My first lesson was to tell me what these pedals do – Oh right! Oh, I can remember Brian saying ‘speed up, speed up’ but I wasn’t sure what might be coming the other way (Down the leafy roads behind our house). ‘Brake into the bend; accelerate out of the bend!’ What? ‘Turn your wheel, **TURN YOUR WHEEL, TURN YOUR WHEEL!**’ (This is 1972 – am I damaged?). And he then tells me I should put in for the test – ‘but I can’t do it!’ I passed! Brian then told me I could legally drive - but I needed to go out and learn to drive properly – (but we didn’t have a car!!!!).

I’m sorry if some of you never got beyond that frightening stage – but those of us who have been driving for some years recognise that we drive with knowledge but also instinct. We can deal with most new situations we are faced with – even driving on the wrong side of the road abroad. I think this is what Peter and Paul grew to be able to do – they allowed their experience to allow them to know their faith in a way which was natural for them to respond. And they tell us today that we should not be afraid to let our faith in Jesus become a natural part of us – so that we can face new faith issues like lockdown. In the end Peter did not just stay local, Paul did not just travel away and never return – they both have gifts which the other learned to appreciate, but their discipleship widened their abilities – even to some things they might have rather not been faced with!

It may be a useful thing to ponder our own faith journey. Where have the growth places been? What has changed us? Am I more confident as a disciple at this stage in my life than I was..... when? Have I faced some faith situations I am surprised I could cope with?

A note from a reader:

“Prayer then is always an unfinished business -because it’s part of our journey towards God.It is the person who finds prayer easy who needs to worry.There may well be times when we do feel God very close, and we must praise him for these moments; for they are like oases in the desert ,that give us refreshment for the ongoing journey.But when we find prayer difficult that’s a sign we are on the road, rather than stagnating in some shady oasis ; and however we feel like, as we trudge this rocky road through life ,we need always to remember that we are not alone, that the saints are always walking with us and supporting us with their prayers”

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

