

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

1st July 2020

Wednesday of the 13th Week of the Year

(Fifteenth Wednesday 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)

Amos 5:14-15.21-24

*Seek good and not evil
so that you may live,
and that the Lord, God of Hosts, may really be with you
as you claim he is.
Hate evil, love good,
maintain justice at the city gate,
and it may be that the Lord, God of Hosts, will take pity
on the remnant of Joseph.
I hate and despise your feasts,
I take no pleasure in your solemn festivals.
When you offer me holocausts,
I reject your oblations,
and refuse to look at your sacrifices of fattened cattle.
Let me have no more of the din of your chanting,
no more of your strumming on harps.
But let justice flow like water,
and integrity like an unfailing stream.*

Psalm 49

*'Listen, my people, I will speak;
Israel, I will testify against you,
for I am God, your God.

I accuse you, lay the charge before you.
'I find no fault with your sacrifices,
your offerings are always before me.
I do not ask more bullocks from your farms,
nor goats from among your herds.

'I own all the beasts of the forest,
beasts in their thousands on my hills.
I know all the birds in the sky,
all that moves in the field belongs to me.

I will show God's salvation to the upright.
'Were I hungry, I would not tell you,
for I own the world and all it holds.
Do you think I eat the flesh of bulls,
or drink the blood of goats?

'How can you recite my commandments
and take my covenant on your lips,
you who despise my law
and throw my words to the winds?'*

Matthew 8:28-34

When Jesus reached the country of the Gadarenes on the other side of the lake, two demoniacs came towards him out of the tombs – creatures so fierce that no one could pass that way. They stood there shouting, ‘What do you want with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before the time?’ Now some distance away there was a large herd of pigs feeding, and the devils pleaded with Jesus, ‘If you cast us out, send us into the herd of pigs.’ And he said to them, ‘Go then’, and they came out and made for the pigs; and at that the whole herd charged down the cliff into the lake and perished in the water. The swineherds ran off and made for the town, where they told the whole story, including what had happened to the demoniacs. At this the whole town set out to meet Jesus; and as soon as they saw him they implored him to leave the neighbourhood.

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

I was the priest in one of the big Victorian churches in Preston for a while and every so often the Victorian Society would ask if they could come and look around. It is nice to have people who are interested, isn't it? However, they would always end by saying how lovely it would be to replace the Altar facing the wall, the extra benches on the side walls, and other fancy Victoriana. I then had to remind them that this church represented a community of living Christian Catholics at the end of the twentieth century, in a world quite different from the one for which these churches were originally built for. I had a final message which asked them whether they lived in Victorian Museums – as the community here was using this building, not as a museum, but as a place to gather to celebrate their lives as disciples of Jesus by thanking God in the Eucharist. Most had not a clue, of course. It's nice to have a nice church building, but it is simply a museum if the faith community is not the centre of it and gaining life for the rest of their daily life.

Something similar is happening when the Government allows us to prepare to open our “Buildings for Worship” – but strictly maintain distancing. It seems to suggest that churches are for pre-Christian people who come to “keep God happy”, “do God a favour”, “keep him sweet” – this is not what Jesus was offering his friends at the Last Supper was it? It is interesting that people on the Parish WhatsApp, right from the beginning of lockdown, were looking forward to a time when we could meet together again to celebrate Mass and to gather together to share tales and concerns, eat and drink, spend time together. At the start of Mass the first thing the Roman Missal concentrates on is Jesus' invitation to “gather” – the first Hymn is referred to as the “gathering song” (to help us “sing off the same hymn-sheet!”), the opening prayer is traditionally known as the “Collect” as it “collects us together” and invites us to gather our week to thank God. You will recognise many other liturgical messages which remind us that we are not meeting simply to do God a favour, or for private devotion, but to celebrate who we are as God's people, together, and to ask for nourishment to be more like Jesus, his son. It is true that, in responding to Jesus' invitation to join him in his Eucharist, we are worshipping his Father – but, if we have any appreciation of what it means to be Church, we will see that most of our response comes from our needs rather than God's need.

Now, I mention this partly because many of us have grown in our understanding of being Church and the importance of the Eucharist during lockdown; partly because I am concerned that the slow move to celebrate Mass with small numbers, with people distanced, with truncated liturgy etc will not really satisfy us; but mainly because our present pain is the opposite to the issue the people have when Amos takes God's message to them!

Amos speaks God's words to the people of Israel. God reminds the people what he has said to them through the generations – the gifts he has offered them for a fulfilled life:

*“seek good, not evil”
“Hate evil, love good”
“maintain justice”*

Why? *“so that you may live,
and the Lord, God of Hosts,
may really be with you –
as you claim he is!”*

And then the knife is turned! God says he despises their festivals, holocausts, oblations! The people who have forgotten what God is about have continued to try to “keep God happy” – they still have regular celebrations and sacrifices – and they obviously do this with great gusto and flamboyance and organisation and pomp. But it is empty. When it is finished they go back to their faithless, sinful lives, neglect justice – they do not need God but have religious actions as a front. God’s message is strong:

*“I hate and despise your feasts,
I take no pleasure in your solemn festivals.
When you offer me holocausts,
I reject your oblations,
and refuse to look at your sacrifices of fattened cattle.
Let me have no more of the din of your chanting,
no more of your strumming on harps.
But let justice flow like water,
and integrity like an unfailing stream”*

Three thousand years after these events it allows us to reflect that our liturgy does not exist for itself as something to sooth God – our Eucharist is bringing to God, in thanks, all that we do and are as brothers and sisters of Jesus, his son, and the highpoint is celebrating his death and resurrection, after which we are fed with his life.

The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (Lumen Gentium) from the Second Vatican Council described the Eucharist as *“the source and summit of the whole Christian life”*. The summit of any mountain would be very close to the ground if something were not holding it up! The active Christian life and the Eucharist cannot be separated – they exist together like a living entity. As Jesus says:

‘I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.’ (John 14:18-21)

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 2020

*“There is no true love without the cross, that is, without a personal price to pay...And when borne with Jesus, the cross is not scary because He is always at our side to support us in the hour of the most difficult trial, to give us strength and courage. **Nor is it necessary to get agitated to preserve one’s own life through fearful or egotistical behaviour.”***

Pope Francis

ANGELUS PRAYER JUNE 28, 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 & Corana 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