

# St John the Evangelist, Poulton

2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020

Thursday of the 13<sup>th</sup> Week of the Year

(Fifteenth Thursday 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.

**Note from Fr Peter:**

A full list of Deanery church opening (which have been sent to me) are below  
News of the slow opening of Mass – details tomorrow.

Can I really thank those who return really helpful and thoughtful responses on my scripture reflections – It helps me a lot – especially if they help you! Some good ones today.

*(Daily Scripture is available from [www.universalis.com](http://www.universalis.com))*

**Amos 7:10-17**

*Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent word to Jeroboam king of Israel as follows. 'Amos is plotting against you in the heart of the House of Israel; the country can no longer tolerate what he keeps saying. For this is what he says, "Jeroboam is going to die by the sword, and Israel go into exile far from its country."' To Amos, Amaziah said, 'Go away, seer; get back to the land of Judah; earn your bread there, do your prophesying there. We want no more prophesying in Bethel; this is the royal sanctuary, the national temple.' 'I was no prophet, neither did I belong to any of the brotherhoods of prophets,' Amos replied to Amaziah 'I was a shepherd, and looked after sycamores: but it was the Lord who took me from herding the flock, and the Lord who said, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel." So listen to the word of the Lord.*

*'You say:*

*"Do not prophesy against Israel,  
utter no oracles against the House of Isaac."*

*'Very well, this is what the Lord says,*

*"Your wife will be forced to go on the streets,  
your sons and daughters will fall by the sword,  
your land be parcelled out by measuring line,  
and you yourself die on unclean soil  
and Israel will go into exile far distant from its own land."*

**Psalms 18**

*The law of the Lord is perfect,  
it revives the soul.*

*The rule of the Lord is to be trusted,  
it gives wisdom to the simple.*

*The precepts of the Lord are right,  
they gladden the heart.*

*The command of the Lord is clear,  
it gives light to the eyes.*

*The fear of the Lord is holy,  
abiding for ever.*

*The decrees of the Lord are truth  
and all of them just.*

*They are more to be desired than gold,  
than the purest of gold  
and sweeter are they than honey,  
than honey from the comb.*

**Matthew 9:1-8**

*Jesus got in the boat, crossed the water and came to his own town. Then some people appeared, bringing him a paralytic stretched out on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'Courage, my child, your sins are forgiven.' And at this some scribes said to themselves, 'This man is blaspheming.' Knowing what was in their minds*

*Jesus said, 'Why do you have such wicked thoughts in your hearts? Now, which of these is easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"? But to prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' – he said to the paralytic – 'get up, and pick up your bed and go off home.' And the man got up and went home. A feeling of awe came over the crowd when they saw this, and they praised God for giving such power to men..*

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

Jesus himself said “a prophet is not respected in his own land” – but are we surprised that a prophet is certainly not accepted in a foreign land?! And this is what we see here today. Actually the worst situation is when someone from an obscure part of our **own** country really gets a rough time with us!

But here it is not Amos who is speaking – but GOD! It can be difficult to separate the message from the messenger, can't it? This is the core of today's Old Testament reading. There is history, there are people, and there is the Word of God. God spoke these words to a prophet. God spoke these words to the people of Israel 3000 years ago, God has spoken these words over millennia to Jewish and Christian people alike, and on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 he speaks them to us. They may be the same words but we are new people and in a different age – how do we learn to hear?

In any prophetic words from God two things can get in the way of our hearing: that we reject the prophet ('he's got a funny accent!'); and that our own needs/ likes/ understanding/ preferences/ selfishness get in the way ('But that's not what I want!')

A slight distraction can be, especially if we don't like the message, that we can turn on God. Even today's passage can make us wonder why this God is so cruel as to threaten that: “*Your wife will be forced to go on the streets*”. But we have heard of many situations in the world – in our own country! – where the results of poverty, lack of work, poor social situations have given women no other way of feeding their children but to “go on the streets”. God is not only accusing the wealthy and increasingly Godless people of Israel of personal sin - but also accusing the kingdom of institutional sinfulness.

I hope, in these days of concentrating on the real presence of the Lord in his written Word, it is worth re-reading these scriptures with this in mind and hearing what God might be saying to us today. (I will follow with some of my morning reflections / revelations!)

Why do we reject being part of God's care for his people? In the last few months we have seen a number of issues which many in our society would say “are not my sin”:

“People on the street” – when we want to, for the sake of **our** health, we can find help for people on the street: but what now? Is this a priority for us in the future? A huge amount of practical help has been given to homeless people over the past months – but will we return to saying ‘we don't want to give help because we don't want to attract them to the Fylde’? (maybe even a Virus can be prophetic?)

“Black Lives Matter” – I'm sure we would not disagree – but what am I doing wrong that people with different coloured skin are, and feel, degraded? Or maybe: “what do I need to do better / differently/ speak out about/ use different words about?”

“World Poverty” - A number of parishioners are keen to highlight how our natural concern for ourselves and our families during lockdown has distracted us from helping those, also

battling with the Virus, in developing countries. (You can send money to CAFOD through the details online, or in an envelope through the presbytery letterbox). But a national governmental change has crept in during the distraction of lockdown that the British Department for International Development and Foreign Office are proposed to be merged so that: “more can now be done to focus aid spending”. (reported 20.06.2020). These are big issues but we need to keep an eye on, at least, those who think this is a retrograde step in encouraging the relatively rich helping developing countries.

“Working together to beat the Virus” – this morning the radio news interviewed an American scientist who was trying, with scientific data, to persuade people to help the nation combat the virus by concentrating on distancing and, at least, wearing a mask in crowded situations. Some of the people were interviewed saying that they “we Americans and we do not wear masks”. It reminded me of Amos being interviewed by the High Priest! God will not ‘smite’ people with disease – but our personal lack of cooperation with reality and God’s creation will affect others. (remember: what happens in America today, happens in Europe tomorrow)

Each of you will have your own concerns, interests and charitable connections in our world. Just looking at the lists we have thrown up very quickly just imagine the number of Prophets who, even though they may not even be aware they are prophetic, are speaking God’s concerns for his people today.

One of our main jobs as disciples of Jesus is to confirm others in their prophetic work, in speaking for God and his goodness. We often say we “are Baptised as Prophets” – but this can seem daunting – It comforts us when others notice and confirm us that its happening in us already! And maybe if no one confirms you – give your work to God and he will confirm you!

**A message from St Matthew** – The Muslims regard Jesus as a Prophet: He speaks for God. We know him as ‘God made flesh’: he acts out God’s word! Jesus shows us how to live out the way the Father wants us to love each other. Jesus is the ‘human face of God’, ‘God’s Word with skin on it’. So read today’s Gospel passage (actually any Gospel passage) and think of what God was saying to the people of Israel through Amos – then how Jesus acts it out. Jesus is drawn to the poor, the marginalised, especially (here) people whom society and religion neglect. But this is not just a personal story of the paralysed man. Jesus confirms the people who were bringing the man: “*Seeing **their faith**, Jesus said to the paralytic*” – Jesus often leans on the faith of others, not of the person suffering! (Ponder that!). And finally this event deeply affects people who are looking on: “*A feeling of awe came over the crowd when they saw this, and they praised God for giving such power to men..*”

Let us pray for each other as we gain confidence to be Prophets for our own time. And thank each other for the support we give each other in this role. Thanks to all. God bless.

## **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](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](mailto: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://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.)

**Wednesday:** *A lot to think about as we emerge from lock down!*

*I was drawn to the quotation you highlight: "The Eucharist is the source and summit of the whole of Christian life". This needs to be pondered. How, in what way is it the source and the summit? What is the source of our Christian life and to where does it lead us?*

*In the light of the reflections we have had on the Pentecost readings we must come to the conclusion that the source of our life is the Spirit that was breathed out for us upon the tree of the cross. In accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour, we open ourselves to the reality of being transformed by this Spirit into the true, broken body of Christ given for us and wine that is "poured out" for others.*

*This surely is what sacramental sign of the Eucharist and what Communion ('one with') the Lord means. What happens then to us as we celebrate this reality? St Augustine makes it plain: "We are already the body of Christ but we must become that body still more". St John Chrysostom put it more vividly: "in sharing in the Eucharist we become members of his flesh and of his bones...he has kneaded his body with ours".*

*This is the sign that **we must become**. If we don't then Amos cries down to us on behalf of the God of love; "I hate and despise your feasts ...solemn festivals...holocausts...oblations. Let me have no more of the din of your chanting...strumming of harps. But let justice flow like water, and integrity like an unfailing stream."*

*The question then is: How do we, can we, make this a lived experience on our return to the church building and express it in our lives? As you hint: It will be difficult.*

**Wednesday:** I just want to thank you again for the "Virus Times" .I have never been so much in touch with the word of God every day as I am with your explanations and commentary of the scriptures. You make sense of the readings that would normally go over my head.

I agree with the contribution from a reader about" Boney M" I never was keen on the song in 1978 the year I was married but now I can appreciate the lyrics.

You really have gone above and beyond helping your Parishioners every day of the lockdown with your welcome Emails. As another reader says it has felt like a retreat ( a mini one for me as still attending to household duties etc.!) so something good has come out of this awful situation.

Hope your brother is continuing to improve.

**Tuesday:** The Chorley (a St Gregory's Chorley Mass streamer!) deanery met yesterday and one thing stood out for me - the danger to priests, many of whom are in the over 70s category. The burden falls on the younger clergy as a result, (that's you!). How thoughtless I have been, maybe as congregations we all are? As there are adequate online services, the risks involved for all do not make any sense to me. Sure we miss the actual services but if we are to lose more priests (or parishioners!) what good is that? I feel that there should be some way of limiting exposure but realise that this goes against the very nature of priestly conscience. As for congregations, surely we can wait a little? After all there is no current obligation to attend if that is a worry for some.

### People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Mary Hull RIP	Who is being buried today
Peter Sweeney RIP	Who's funeral service is at the Crematorium tomorrow
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