

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

30th July 2020

Thursday of the 17th Week of the Year
(Nineteenth Thursday of Isolation)

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com
Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk/



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: **We will need more stewards to have more Masses.** Please let me know if you are willing. Thanks to those who have volunteered – but we need more to move forward

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

Jeremiah 18:1-6

The word that was addressed to Jeremiah by the Lord, 'Get up and make your way down to the potter's house; there I shall let you hear what I have to say.' So I went down to the potter's house; and there he was, working at the wheel. And whenever the vessel he was making came out wrong, as happens with the clay handled by potters, he would start afresh and work it into another vessel, as potters do. Then this word of the Lord was addressed to me, 'House of Israel, can not I do to you what this potter does? – it is the Lord who speaks. Yes, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so you are in mine, House of Israel.'

Matthew 13:47-53

Jesus said to the crowds: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea that brings in a haul of all kinds. When it is full, the fishermen haul it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in a basket and throw away those that are no use. This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the just to throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.'

'Have you understood all this?' They said, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Well then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both new and old.'

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

I remember very well my first day at school. My teacher was a 'Miss McLaughlin' and, I recall, very young and pretty (!). The thing I remember doing during that day was using plasticine to make an airplane. 'If you have to go to school' I remember thinking 'this is a great thing to do'. I think things went downhill from there (especially in the second class where the teacher was a fierce older woman - or she seemed so to me! Thankfully we moved house and school!)

I mention this because today's Jeremiah reading takes me back – and to all those 'arty & crafty' things we do through life which give us a good feeling and, also, give us the chance to 'start again' should be make a mess of it.

To go a step further I heard someone say yesterday 'Oh, notice that Sunflower – its smiling at us'. One of the things we humans do is have the ability to imagine the mind of inanimate objects! So, for a moment, with Jeremiah, lets imagine what it's like to be a lump of clay in the hands of a potter. You do see novices to potting being given a wheel and told to get on with it – knowing we were going to laugh at the new potter when the clay collapses and goes all over! Actually, perhaps we are laughing at the clay, rather than the potter? Now imagine a skilled potter gently forming beautiful shapes with what might seem 'love' or 'concern' – but even then, when they try a new shape it may go wrong and they have to start again. The

potter is not blaming the clay. Actually the new outcome is a cooperation between the potter and the clay – and, on the whole, a concerned potter will not demand something she knows the clay is not capable of.

So there we have it. Jeremiah is told to go to the potter's workshop and watch him work. (I particularly like the phrase: "as potters do") God invites Jeremiah to see God at work with his people as he watches the potter:

"Yes, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so you are in mine, House of Israel."

If you didn't know this God, who is known well by Jeremiah, you may see him as a fumbling new potter who doesn't care for his clay but is keen, at every mistake, to squash the clay, Swear at it and start again. But Jeremiah knows the God he meets is a careful and skilled potter who works together with the clay which wishes to work with this potter. The clay, in the hands of such a potter will be pleased to be moulded into the best the two, together, can create. Even to start again is a loving act which gives life to the clay.

So, two things to ponder:

Am I open to being moulded from being 'who I am' to being 'the best I can be' by a God who I know loves me and is capable of this with the minimum of pain? Where are those areas I know need remoulding? Do I believe there are areas I don't recognise need remoulding? (Heck!)

Whatever areas of art or craft we are drawn to are important to our humanity – we are built to be creative. How are we built to be creative? Because we believe we are made by God and in the image of God; the God who creates everything. When we do creative things with our hands, minds, whatever, we are actively sharing in the creative nature of God. Don't be worried that we are not as skilled an artist as the Creator – but be careful not to reject the image of God in us by saying words like: 'I can't draw'. We are not all called to be world renowned artists for others, but simply to share the creative nature of our Creator. Being creative is a prayer of active trust

(My mother discovered with a certain surprise, later in life, that she was a great cake decorating artist – but she still underestimated her ability by not charging people for wedding cakes any more than the costs!!! Oh, I have never become a plane designer or a potter! But I appreciate those who did)

Lockdown is a good time to practice our creative prayers – Thanks to sewers during this time!

PARISH NOTICES:

- **Diocesan Virtual Lourdes Pilgrimage:** The Diocese of Lancaster Lourdes Pilgrimage Committee will present a virtual pilgrimage during the week of 24th July - 1st August 2020, when we would have

been in Lourdes. The attached itinerary shows the Masses and Services planned for the week. Could I please ask you to promote this as best as you can within your parishes and on your websites.

The virtual pilgrimage will primarily be accessed through the pilgrimage facebook page with prompts and reminders being posted before events:

<https://www.facebook.com/LancastersLourdesPilgrimage> . Links will be posted on the pilgrimage website at www.lancasterlourdes.co.uk and the Diocesan website.

- **Working towards opening church for Mass**

You will have heard that the government has given permission for places of worship to open – but with strict guidance and under the supervision of the Bishop and the Parish Priest. The two most important messages are that vulnerable people must stay safe at home, and that distancing will affect numbers and how we celebrate the Eucharist. This is not easy – and we need everyone’s cooperation.

Before we look at a way forward for our parish could I mention that we need to have two trained, and not vulnerable, stewards to be present at each celebration. This our starting point to move forward. We have to start with the same practices we have had at the “private prayer” opening demands which you may be familiar with. If you feel you could help us to extend our availability for Mass please come this week to see what being a steward entails.

I have met with our existing six stewards who volunteered to run the ‘private prayer’ openings and we agreed that we have to move forwards slowly so that we stay healthy and friendly. One of the difficulties will be that our church can only hold 30 people from different households in the congregation within the safety guidelines – though, of course, people from the same household can sit together. This will mean that if we have the allotted number of congregation the stewards will have to, gently, turn others away – this is counter cultural for us, but is for health reasons so please do not take this personally!

Many vulnerable people, those living with people who are vulnerable and families have already suggested that they feel this is a little soon for them to feel safe with a larger mixed group in church – and this is understandable. (It is to give our understanding to such people that I am happy to take our time in opening) We are not beginning with Sunday Masses to ensure people do not mistake ‘opening for Mass’ as ‘back to normal’!

As we already have the stewards who are willing to be present we will celebrate Mass this week on Tuesday and Thursday morning at 9.30am at St John’s.

For the sake of those who work we would like to move towards Mass the following week on Wednesday evening at 7pm – but this will depend on having volunteers to steward.

Please remember: The bishops are keen to remind us that “the obligation to celebrate Mass on Sunday remains suspended”. (It is easy for us to have become accustomed to distancing in the outside world – but fall into what life was in inside church – be careful!)

Finally please remember that the Bishops can suspend the Sunday Obligation as this is a ‘law of the Church’ – they cannot suspend “keep Holy the Sabbath Day’ as this is God’s law. Please ensure you continue to celebrate the Resurrection as you have been doing: by praying the scriptures, streaming etc

(‘Virus Times Scripture Reflections will continue to help us gather around the Word of God)

Tuesday	Mass at 9.30am at St John’s
Wednesday	Mass at 7.00pm at St John’s
Thursday	Mass at 9.30am at St John’s
Friday	Mass at 9.30am at St John’s

- **St Martin & Hilda’s open for private prayer**

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

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. St Chad’s are celebration the Eucharist in St Hilda’s on Wednesday at 11am – you are invited to drop in.

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

We could celebrate the Eucharist on Wednesdays if there was a call and some stewards.

- **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.
- **Fleetwood Food Bank:** If you know of anyone you think has need of a parcel of food from the Food Bank please telephone 01253 774313 – they will need an address to have it delivered to.
- **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. They 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

Thoughts contributed by Virus Times’ readers:

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

Friday: Knock Shrine is hosting 'Jesuit Week' 26 July-2nd August it might be of interest.

<https://www.knockshrine.ie/jesuit-week-online-26-july-2-august/?v=79cba1185463>

It was good to be back at Mass this week - thanks.

Monday: A quote from Rowan Williams "Somebody once said that the deepest problem in prayer is often not the absence of God but the absence of me.....God cannot speak to you if you are not actually there"

Saturday: Thanks, Fr Peter, for introducing me to the prophet Micah.

Thinking of the (dangerous?) men in Downing Street and in the White House who (in my opinion!) 'lie on their beds planning mischief' is disheartening. Micah's preaching about giving a voice to the powerless is uplifting.

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Bernard Hargreaves RIP	Funeral Service at St Martin’s on Thursday 6 th August & Crematorium
Anne Connelly RIP	Died in Stella Matutina. Graveside service at Carleton 29 th July

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.
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(<i>Not Covid-19</i>)	Mrs Donnelly's Mum
Paul Sharrock (<i>Not Covid-19</i>) (and family: Kathryn, Mary & Rachael)	<i>Is showing continued, but slow, progress. He is eating a proper diet and having a lot of physiotherapy – which he's not enjoying! Fr Peter</i>
Parents home schooling AND home job-ing	Thank God for our parents – but, after so long, finding it difficult to fulfil their work responsibilities and 'entertain' their children under lockdown.
Our Teachers	Who are resting!!!