

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

1st August 2020

Saturday of the 17th Week of the Year

(Nineteenth Saturday 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:

Thanks to those who write in their responses to our scripture reflections – it makes it all worth while! Thanks for giving me the chance to continue my vocation to preach the Gospel!
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 26:11-16,24

The priests and prophets addressed the officials and all the people, 'This man deserves to die, since he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.'

Jeremiah, however, replied to the people as follows:

'The Lord himself sent me to say all the things you have heard against this Temple and this city. So now amend your behaviour and actions, listen to the voice of the Lord your God: if you do, he will relent and not bring down on you the disaster he has pronounced against you. For myself, I am as you see in your hands. Do whatever you please or think right with me. But be sure of this, that if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood on yourselves, on this city and on its citizens, since the Lord has truly sent me to you to say all these words in your hearing.'

The officials and all the people then said to the priests and prophets, 'This man does not deserve to die: he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.'

Jeremiah had a protector in Ahikam son of Shaphan, so he was not handed over to the people to be put to death.

Matthew 14:1-12

Herod the tetrarch heard about the reputation of Jesus, and said to his court, 'This is John the Baptist himself; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.'

Now it was Herod who had arrested John, chained him up and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. For John had told him, 'It is against the Law for you to have her.' He had wanted to kill him but was afraid of the people, who regarded John as a prophet. Then, during the celebrations for Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company, and so delighted Herod that he promised on oath to give her anything she asked. Prompted by her mother she said, 'Give me John the Baptist's head, here, on a dish.' The king was distressed but, thinking of the oaths he had sworn and of his guests, he ordered it to be given her, and sent and had John beheaded in the prison. The head was brought in on a dish and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. John's disciples came and took the body and buried it; then they went off to tell Jesus.

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

It is interesting how easily peoples can be persuaded one way or another – especially when the leaders speak with absolute belief: here the priests and the false prophets. But the other reality here is that these people are speaking from their own view of life and what is important – while Jeremiah is clear that they can judge him if they want but he is speaking for God. The priests and false prophets are concerned that Jeremiah is speaking against the Temple and the city. Jerusalem continues to this day be fought over as important and the Temple was the

place where God places his foot on the earth. As Catholic Christians we also have special places, understandings and rituals and it is also a danger that we can make some of these more important than the God who is the centre of our lives – we need to keep our ‘belief hierarchy’ clear. On Wednesday we heard that Martha and Mary were both right – but there are times when we need to remind ourselves which choice is ‘more right’ for this moment. Jesus spoke regularly about such issues which were never ‘wrong’ but there are times to chose what is more important: “The people at the wedding feast would never fast when the bridegroom is with them!” (But there are times to fast) etc.

In the year of the Word this Pandemic took off us access to the gift of Jesus really present in the Sacrament of his body and blood – but it did allow us to concentrate on the presence of Jesus really present in his written Word. For centuries our Church has accidentally concealed the gift of the scriptures to such a degree that we have to have a ‘year of the Word’ to remind us that Jesus is alive in the Eucharist – but also alive in other ways. These months have been a great time of listening to God in the scriptures, haven’t they.

Jeremiah problem was not that he didn’t shout loud enough for the religious leaders to hear God’s message clearly. His problem was trying to help the people realise that it was God that was the centre of their hope – not a building or a city (as important as these were)! It is interesting that it was not the religious leaders, but the representatives of the people, who recognised that Jeremiah did not deserve to die – they saw he had spoken for God! In the relatively recent re-emergence of the importance of the scriptures it has often been ‘the people’, lay people, academics, archaeologists, language experts, teachers, Christian communities, not clergy, who have lead us back to reading the Word of God!

Finally, in your mind, take yourself to the interrogation of Jesus by Pilate and Annas and notice how similar to this passage the Gospel writers picture. Jesus was having the same difficulty in helping the religious and civil leaders hear God speaking – because he was seeming to criticise them and the Temple. The Early Church certainly knew what the presence of Jesus and the scriptures meant to their faith.

From where, or from whom, have you learned your appreciation of scripture?

SATURDAY AUGUST 1, 2020

“Faith begins when we realise we are in need of salvation. We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we founder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars. Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God’s strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.”

Pope Francis

"URBI ET ORBI" BLESSING, MARCH 27, 2020

PARISH NOTICES:

- **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)

- **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. “

Thoughts contributed by Virus Times’ readers:

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

Thursday: *I liked your Mary and Martha story yesterday and I decided that I am probably a Martha eg at Christmas my sister and I will be making the meal together but she will then disappear and return in her Christmas outfit ready to greet the guests and pop the Champagne. I meantime remain sweating over the roast potatoes and Brussel Sprouts!! (she does bring me glass) but I know someone has to be the hostess!! I will try and stop being a martyr!!*

I also appreciate the stories you tell about your family and your Mum and Dad (they sounded lovely) as I then think of my parents RIP. It's great you can remember your first day at school I have a school photo but that's it. My two daughters attended St John's primary school and I know they have lovely memories of their time there.

Thursday: *Thanks Fr. Peter for the Virus Times. You have linked the Old and New Testament well to give us a clearer understanding of them. Your thoughts for meditating have been inspirational. Today's readings takes me back to my pottery time when my clay objects never turned out the way I hoped!! Thanks also to the kind folk who provided the appropriate music and songs for us over the last few weeks. Much appreciated.*

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!!!