

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

27th November 2020

Friday of the Thirty-fourth Week of the Year
(Thirty-sixth Friday 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.

Notes from Fr Peter: Being together to pray allows us the quiet to listen. Next Wednesday should allow us to return to the 'distanced Mass' settings we had before the recent lockdown (That's my understanding, anyway). So:

From next week:

Tuesday	Private Prayer from 9.30am to 10am at St John's
Wednesday	Morning Mass at 9.30am at Ss Martin & Hilda's
Thursday	Morning Mass at 9.30am at St John's
Friday Private	Morning Mass at 9.30am at St John's
Saturday	Vigil Mass at 6.00pm at St John's

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

Revelation 20:1-4,11-21:2

I, John, saw an angel come down from heaven with the key of the Abyss in his hand and an enormous chain. He overpowered the dragon, that primeval serpent which is the devil and Satan, and chained him up for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and shut the entrance and sealed it over him, to make sure he would not deceive the nations again until the thousand years had passed. At the end of that time he must be released, but only for a short while.

Then I saw some thrones, and I saw those who are given the power to be judges take their seats on them. I saw the souls of all who had been beheaded for having witnessed for Jesus and for having preached God's word, and those who refused to worship the beast or his statue and would not have the brand-mark on their foreheads or hands; they came to life, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Then I saw a great white throne and the One who was sitting on it. In his presence, earth and sky vanished, leaving no trace. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing in front of his throne, while the book of life was opened, and other books opened which were the record of what they had done in their lives, by which the dead were judged.

The sea gave up all the dead who were in it; Death and Hades were emptied of the dead that were in them; and every one was judged according to the way in which he had lived. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the burning lake. This burning lake is the second death; and anybody whose name could not be found written in the book of life was thrown into the burning lake.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband.

Luke 21:29-33

Jesus told his disciples a parable: 'Think of the fig tree and indeed every tree. As soon as you see them bud, you know that summer is now near. So with you when you see these things happening: know that the kingdom of God is near. I tell you solemnly, before this generation has passed away all will have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.'

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

- We said this book would be difficult – just remember: **'God is in charge; Jesus is Lord'**

News people and politicians often apologise for 'mixing their metaphors'. It struck me this morning that St John is, in this work, the ultimate mixer as he puts one image on top of another to show how great is God and how destroyed is death and evil! It all becomes a great and colourful 'mist' – and that

is probably what he wants it to be. We don't 'understand' how big our God is, but we can try to find words, experiences or images which help.

After the message that the devil would be 'chained up for a thousand years' it is not surprising that fundamentalist Christians in the late 10th century were becoming very fearful as they reached the millennium! But it didn't happen! It is another pointer that this book is a vision and not a prediction!

It is important that we continually celebrate God's saving power because, our minds might be open to agree with this sentiment, our bodies, weakness, general fear, need for security, weakness of faith – whatever you may call it – need continually uplifting and encouraging. The vision is clear about God being victorious – but our personal heart reflection might lead us to ask: 'Is this big God too big to notice little me?' This is where a reflection on the weakness of the incarnate God can touch us.

I must confess I have been shocked at the encouragement our month of 'private prayer together' has given me, personally – shame we didn't think of it sooner! Next time? NO!.....

The middle section of the passage reminds us of those who give their lives in death to God – the Martyrs. It also reminds us that death is not the end, but a stage in the 'life' process. This does not mean that we live here and then are 'ditched' in some far-away asylum! But Jesus is very clear that this 'Kingdom' he promises is both here and to life eternal. The continuity between this part of life and the next part of life is important if we are to remain who we are, and who we were created to be. People often speak of those who have gone before us as being 'angels in heaven' – St Paul would say they are much more important than mere angels (Exotic as they may seem to be to us!): they are '**Saints** in heaven'.

The passage moves, now, to a picture of the 'New Creation'. It is new, remember, because of the immensity of what God has achieved in the death and resurrection of his son – Our Jesus – yes, really!

Notice that the last passage insists:

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth"

The effects of What Jesus has achieved is so great that it not only renews the Earth – it also rebuilds Heaven! Do we need to be careful to listen to what Jesus says about eternal life and avoid accepting a childish, local mythology, which is unchangeable. What will the arrival of our loved ones add to this 'New Heaven' – like their presence made a difference to the 'New Earth'?

Please do add your prayers to those of Myra Murphy from our parish who is dying. I feel sorry for you that I have the honour of spending time with her as she continues to make a difference to the family around her (Except they complain they have to leave every so often because they hurt with laughing!!!). There is no doubt that, if 'our saints in heaven' worry about us, she will certainly calm them down with faith-filled stories and laughter when she meets them!

Keep in touch with your 'Saints in heaven' and encourage the children to do the same.

just remember: '**God is in charge; Jesus is Lord**'

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 27, 2020

"Faith is not a momentary leap, but a courageous disposition to call on God, even to "argue" with him, without resigning oneself to evil and injustice."

Pope Francis

GENERAL AUDIENCE NOVEMBER 11, 2020

PARISH NOTICES:

COVID 19 Security - When you come to Church during the present Lockdown:

- ✓ Despite getting used to physical distancing over the past three months returning to a familiar situation, like church, can make us forget we are still threatened by a virus that could kill vulnerable people. We have been asked to ensure Government and Church rules which might seem intrusive but they are designed to remind us to be careful and, above all, to keep distances. Please help us with this. (if you have visited church for private prayer you will recognise these requests. Thanks)
 - ✓ Government guidelines demand that all the congregation (except those with exemption certificates) wear mouth and nose masks in church
 - ✓ Please maintain a 2m distance as you approach and enter church and be guided by the stewards.
 - ✓ Please note there is a 'one way' system – entering church by the left hand door.
 - ✓ Please sanitise your hands as you enter church
 - ✓ You will be invited to leave your name and contact detail for 'Track & Tracing' in case of need.
 - ✓ To minimise movement in church Stewards will direct you to fill the benches from the front. You will probably not be able to go in your 'usual' bench but that will give you a new perspective!
 - ✓ Please sanitise your hands as you leave church by the other door than the one you entered.
 - ✓ As you leave church please move away from the door and remember to distance yourselves if you speak to other people.
 - ✓ There is a basket at the back of church for your offertory donations – thank you.
 - ✓ There are weekly bulletins at the back of church with other information. However please regard any paper you touch as your own to take away with you. Please do not leave it behind in case of contamination.
 - ✓ Thanks to our small, but keen, band of stewards, without whom we could not open our church. Please speak to them if you would like to help with this.
 - ✓ If you want to bring your own prayerbook or bible that is fine – but please do not leave it in church for others to touch.
 - ✓ *Please pray for all people throughout the world who are prevented for celebrating the Eucharist regularly for all sorts of reasons. What do they do?*
- **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: www.wyre.gov.uk/coronavirus. 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 responses from these Virus Times Reflections from our parishioners: Thanks to contributors.)

Tuesday: *What a Wonderful Arrangement of today's Psalm.
It's great that they share their God given talent with others.*

Friday; *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the SIN of the world." (I have always been puzzled when we say at Mass "who takes away the sins of the world")*

I began to reflect more deeply on what the sin of the world actually is, and perhaps have come to the conclusion that the only sin, out of which all other sins derive, is selfish pride: putting myself in front of every other consideration and every other person. If, in our world view, we put humanity at the top of creation and exclude God the Creator from the equation, then the key issue for our life can easily become how to get to the top of the pile (no matter how little or large the pile is that we personally inhabit). If, however, we take away selfish pride then we live in service of others.

How did Jesus take this away? Paul challenges us, as we have read previously, to put on the mind of Christ who ... "emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave." (Philippians Ch 2) and John in his account of the Last Supper puts these words into Jesus mouth: "wash each other's feet ... I have given you an example" (John 13, 2-16)

The result: "And therefore ... God raised him high .. every knee should bend at the name of Jesus" (Phil Ch 2) and in the vision of heaven we see what this means: "The Lamb that was sacrificed is worthy to be given power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and power ... and the four animals said 'Amen'; and the elders prostrated themselves to worship".

The vision John gives us of heaven is one of the right order of things as you have in your reflections drawn attention to all the time: God is God and Jesus is Lord. We bow down in wonder and worship at the feet of the Lamb. Amen

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Kath Wainman has died	Please pray for her and her family
Please pray for Kathleen Keohane who has died	You may have known her. Requiem Mass: Thursday 3 rd December at 3.00pm in St John's – invitations from the family.
Myra Murphy is sick – and asks for your prayers	Many of you will know Myra from St Martin's – Myra asked me to thank you all for your prayers and your thoughts of her – as you can imagine, if you know her, she really means that and feels your prayers.
Peter Brownwood	Who is worried about his health – but progressing well.
Jacinta's Nana Lyn	Poorly and asks for your prayers
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.
Paul Sharrock (Not Covid-19) (and family: Kathryn, Mary & Rachael)	<i>Paul has managed to balance most of his issues after his operation – Paul has returned to his special unit – which has visiting for immediate family but with strict Lockdown II restrictions – Thank you, God. Thanks for your prayers so far - Please continue to pray for them. Fr Peter</i>

'Thank You, God' - Do we have any news to thank God for - as well as other people we are praying for?

Clare and Pete Cobb's glorious music	<i>they have sung us through Covid; it's been a joy</i>
For all our Faith-filled Parishioners with whom we share our weekday Masses.	<i>It's so supportive to be in the presence of others.</i>
To scientists working on a COVID help	