

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

29th November 2020

The First Sunday of Advent

(Thirty-seventh Sunday 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:

Vatican II: The last of Elaine's reflections on this subject (Last Page)

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 this 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)

Isaiah 63:16-17,64:1,3-8

*You, Lord, yourself are our Father,
'Our Redeemer' is your ancient name.
Why, Lord, leave us to stray from your ways
and harden our hearts against fearing you?
Return, for the sake of your servants,
the tribes of your inheritance.

Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down!
– at your Presence the mountains would melt.
No ear has heard,
no eye has seen
any god but you act like this
for those who trust him.
You guide those who act with integrity
and keep your ways in mind.
You were angry when we were sinners;
we had long been rebels against you.
We were all like men unclean,
all that integrity of ours like filthy clothing.
We have all withered like leaves
and our sins blew us away like the wind.
No one invoked your name
or roused himself to catch hold of you.
For you hid your face from us
and gave us up to the power of our sins.
And yet, Lord, you are our Father;
we the clay, you the potter,
we are all the work of your hand.*

Mark 13:33-37

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

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

Like many things in our fast moving times Advent tends to get ignored by society in its eagerness to have ‘Ch...***!’ NOW! And even, then, this feast begins in early December and ends after boxing day. This year this trend is accelerated due to the sad effects of COVID-19 restrictions.

So don’t be too hard on the pagans, as we Christians stole our feast from them! Most cultures, most religions, have a celebration of light near to the point where the days stop becoming shorter and the light gives us hope – we do need something to mark, don’t we, to see us through? Our feast of 25th December was originally marked by the Romans as the feast of ‘Sol Invictus’ – the ‘victorious Sun’. They were only a couple of days out from the ‘shortest day’ but you will notice the evidence of this connection in the Advent prayers.

Today is a few words to help us as we begin Advent.

Firstly we are Christians and we are not pretending we don’t know what we are preparing for as we have celebrated it before. However it is helpful to ‘go back to the promises’ so that we will see what God does in ‘New Light’ – so that we will appreciate the ‘Victorious Son’.

Advent is not a month of just telling the ‘Bethlehem story’ in the readings of Mass. In fact the infancy stories of the Gospels are not told until 17th December – and Mary is not mentioned on Sundays until the 4th Sunday of Advent. (After reading this it might be a useful exercise to write down what scripture readings you think we will be reading, or you would suggest, before 17th – thinking back to previous years will help, or, perhaps, the Mass scripture we have shared during lockdown through the ‘Virus Times’?)

Yesterday I prepared the first stage of the church ‘Advent Wreath’ – as most of us will be spending most of Advent and ‘the Big Feast’ at home it might be good to share our Advent decorations?

Finally today I have re-discovered a pack of Advent cards the Diocese produced some years ago – thanks to Fr Val Farrell (They may have been associated with the ‘New Start with Jesus’ diocesan and parish renewal around the millennium if you remember) I will print them in the ‘Virus Times’ but you might like to print them and stick them on your fridge each day as a prayerful reflection?

Let’s make sure we are open to new light in what God has done for us – in the gospel Jesus says:

“Be on your guard, stay awake”

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2020

“Hold out your hand to the poor, instead of demanding what you lack. In this way, you will multiply the talents you have received.

The season of Christmas is approaching, the holiday season.

How often do we hear people ask: ‘What can I buy?’

What more can I have? I must go shopping.’

*Let us use different words: ‘What can I give to others?’,
in order to be like Jesus, who gave of Himself and
was born in the manger.”*

Pope Francis

HOMILY NOVEMBER 15, 2020

“Waiting in Joyful Hope”

Advent is an attractive season. We often promise ourselves that we will make better use of it, spiritually. Unfortunately, the four weeks before Christmas usually see us very busy about other things. It can be difficult to find time for reflection in such a hectic period. These sets of cards are intended to help you make something of the beautiful readings of Advent, in between all the shopping and the sending of cards.

Using these cards

There is a reflection for each day of Advent. How long you give to each is up to you, but each reflection has four connected parts:

- A quote from the scriptures used at Mass that day.
- A picture of Our Lady, or the Sunday Eucharist, to help focus the thought for that day.
- A personal reflection based on the reading.
- A short prayer, usually taken from the scriptures of that day, which can act as a refrain to be repeated at intervals during the course of the day.

misunderstand what they mean. What is good and hopeful can appear dull and disappointing. On the other hand, what at first seems bright and attractive can turn out to be of little value. Advent encourages us to pause, and look, and see what's really there. The colourful images in the readings encourage us to be aware of the Kingdom of God unfolding in our own lives and leave us *waiting for God to fulfil his plans*.

On with the violet then! When we get to Christmas, we may be surprised to find that the most appropriate colour for that season is very close to home. It may be that the most appropriate colour for celebrating the Nativity of the Lord is one we blend ourselves from the mixture of feelings in our own hearts. Advent helps us identify those feelings.

The Pictures of Our Lady

Our Lady is central to Advent and not just because she literally waited for Jesus to arrive. The Church has always regarded her as the best example of how

Advent: Days of Violet

Violet is the colour we use during Advent. It is a mixture of other colours, principally red and blue, and because it is a mixture, violet seems just the right choice for Advent. Here's why.

Violet is a blend of colours, but once the mixing is done, it becomes its own true self. So too with Advent: the scripture readings of the season are a blend but in the end they give us a definite theme. The readings are full of colourful images depicting the whole range of human feelings: longing, sorrow, anger, perseverance, fear, hope, love, ambition, patience, suffering, enthusiasm, you name them and they are all there. In the end though, Advent blends them all together to give us an overall feeling which is one of *“waiting for something to happen”*.

And there is still another reason why violet is just right for Advent: people often mistake it for purple. With colours we need to take time, pay attention, and see what's really there. The same applies if we are to understand our own lives. We can often confuse the feelings our lives give us, and

all Christians should dispose themselves internally, for the coming of Christ.

That is why the pictures, based on a sculpture of the Virgin Mary, by the late Arthur Dooley, do not attempt to show what Our Lady may have looked like, physically, but rather try to capture her dispositions and attitudes before God.

The figure of Our Lady is offered here as a bridge between the readings and thoughts of the Advent season, and our own efforts to welcome Christ into our lives.

Diocese of Lancaster Registered Charity No. 234331

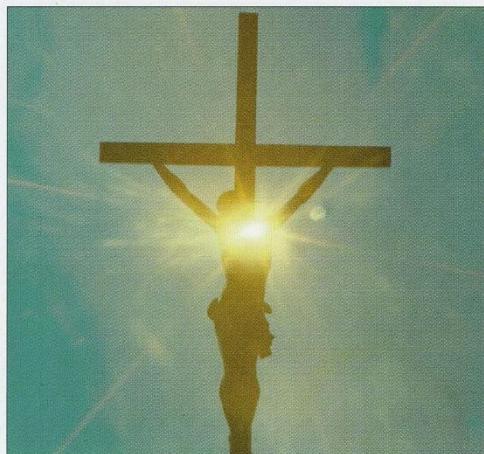
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Advent: Week One

He shall judge between the nations and arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O House of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

(Isaiah 2: 4-5)

Sunday



Thought

Lord, you spoke those words to us through your prophet a long time ago, but they still strike a chord in our hearts today.
Each one of us longs for peace:
peace in the world at large, and peace in our own hearts.
This is the mighty work you call us to do. We can do it, Lord; we can be the agents of your power in our world today.
Dear God, fill us all with a sense of purpose and the courage of our convictions.



Prayer

Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and give us your saving help.

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.)

Saturday: *Thank you for including the psalm. A few of them this week have spoken to me, or sung to me.*

Friday: *Maybe we could still occasionally have a silent prayer meeting? I always fancied the Quaker meetings but never had the courage to find one to attend.*

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

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. Funeral Service: 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	

Thanks to Elaine for passing on to us her reflections and learning about the Second Vatican Council in the Diocesan course. There will be other subjects over the next months which may be good for her to share.

See over:

THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

THE CHURCH AND THE MODERN WORLD – “GAUDIUM ET SPES”

The title of this document means “Joy and Hope” and it really sums up what the Council was about – covering a wide range of topics. It begins by looking at our vocation as human beings – our destiny to “know God” and be “in relationship” with God - Father, Son and Spirit -now and for all eternity. Mind-blowing, isn’t it? However, this knowledge of God is lived out in our relationships with other people and with the world in which we live.

The document talks about how we are dependent upon each other as human beings and we have a responsibility to care for each other – since we are all God’s creation – believers and non-believers alike. The preface states: “The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ”. The document talks about every human being’s right of access to all that leads to a genuinely human life – the necessities of food, housing, clothing, the right to family life, education, work, respect and dignity, freedom to practise religion. It speaks about the evils of war and the violation of human rights. Above all, the document reminds of the greatest commandment of all “to love God and to love our neighbour” and that we can’t have one without the other. It calls for “dialogue” between ourselves and those who are different from us, encouraging us to seek to understand others who think or act differently from us.

Pope John XXIII’s opening address to the Council expressed a desire for dialogue between the Church and the modern world. This document is a starting point for that dialogue. It aims to consider the challenges of the world in the light of the Gospel message of Jesus, which is its duty to proclaim. It acknowledges scientific and technological advances, whilst all the time reminding us of the dignity of mankind and of our ultimate destiny. It tells us that we achieve our destiny, our calling, by living **in the world**, engaging fully with society, playing our full part in social and political life and seeking to find solutions to the problems of the world and the inequalities that exist within it.

Although it is a long document, there are chapter headings and sub-headings to help you to navigate its contents – so you can “dip into it” and look at just a section or topic. There are sections on marriage and the family, politics and public life, work, working conditions and the right to leisure, the evils of war and the need to work for peace, the role of the international community in seeking peace, the role of Christians in international organisations and international aid. You might say all of human life is here! The document ends with a call for on-going dialogue between individuals, between religions, between nations, stating: “Our eagerness for such dialogue excludes nobody; we would like to include those who respect human values without realising the author of such values, as well as those who oppose the Church and persecute it. Since God the Father is the beginning and end of all things, we are called to be brothers and sisters. We ought to work together, without violence and without deceit to build up the world in a spirit of peace.”

Elaine Brownwood