

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

16th January 2021

Saturday of First Week of Ordinary Time

Forty-third Saturday of Isolation

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com

Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk

Second Year of Publication – Third Lockdown

Letter to the Hebrews

*“The word of God
is something alive and active:
it cuts like any double-edged sword
but more finely”*

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:

Lockdown III: If you have symptoms please do not come to church.

Mass during the week:

Saturday	6.00pm	Vigil Mass at St John's
Tuesday	9.30am	St John's
Wednesday	9.30am	St Martin's
Thursday	9.30am	St John's
Friday	9.30am	St John's
Saturday	6.00pm	Vigil Mass at St John's

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

Hebrews 4:12-16

The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely: it can slip through the place where the soul is divided from the spirit, or joints from the marrow; it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts. No created thing can hide from him; everything is uncovered and open to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves.

Since in Jesus, the Son of God, we have the supreme high priest who has gone through to the highest heaven, we must never let go of the faith that we have professed. For it is not as if we had a high priest who was incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us; but we have one who has been tempted in every way that we are, though he is without sin. Let us be confident, then, in approaching the throne of grace, that we shall have mercy from him and find grace when we are in need of help.

Mark 2:13-17

Jesus went out to the shore of the lake; and all the people came to him, and he taught them. As he was walking on he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus, sitting by the customs house, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him.

When Jesus was at dinner in his house, a number of tax collectors and sinners were also sitting at the table with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many of them among his followers. When the scribes of the Pharisee party saw him eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard this he said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners.'

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

For most of us the hearing of 'knife' reminds us of preparing food or whittling wood / gardening etc. It is important for the knife to be sharp because we are aware of how dangerous knives can be if they are not used properly.

Again, looking at the letter to the Hebrews today we need to understand the religious and cultural background of the people the author is writing to. Firstly, for Jews, and those who had been brought up as Jews at this time, knives would also be associated with religious ritual sacrifice in the Temple – or, before this, in scripture in stories of the sacrifice of Isaac etc. This ritual would also have to be very careful in case anyone should get hurt sacrificing a lively animal – and also that the sacrifice would be religiously correct for the animal's sake.

It is with this image that this letter enters the reminder of the importance of the High Priest.

But the author now takes his hearers further so that they can understand who Jesus is and what he has achieved for them. He speaks of Jesus as a High Priest of another order.

The second knife these early Christians would be familiar with is the sword. These will have been seen used with great skill and far less safety! A 'two-edged sword' would be used with particular destruction – it would do suitable damage in different ways both entering and exiting the target!

That's enough of the gory stuff now – but the reality is well known to these original readers.

The passage says:

*"The word of God is something alive and active:
it cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely"*

But then we realise that the author is continuing his insistence that Jesus fulfils all the expectations of the Jewish people – but perfectly; in a completely new way.

Jesus is *"the supreme high priest who has gone through to the highest heaven....."*. He is a High Priest who understands the people whom he represents – but his word (like the High Priest's sword) is used with perfect accuracy for the sake of his communication with God.

This is not a good place to halt this train of thought – but the understanding of what it means for Jesus, the Christ, to be High Priest will be continued next week. So I suggest we spend some time making connections between some of these words and ideas – especially in the minds of the first hearers of this letter.

It may be, simply, that we need to recognise we need to know more about the Jewish understanding of High Priest so that we can find words and images for us to speak of who Jesus is to us in our own day?

(Pope Francis' words are interesting, today 😊 – depending on your age!)

SATURDAY JANUARY 16, 2021

"We become worshipers of the Lord through a gradual process. Experience teaches us, for example, that at fifty we worship differently than we did at thirty. Those who let themselves be shaped by grace usually improve with time: on the outside, we grow older – so Saint Paul tells us – while our inner nature is being renewed each day, as we grow in our understanding of how best to worship the Lord. From this point of view, our failures, crises and mistakes can become learning experiences: often they can help us to be more aware that the Lord alone is worthy of our worship, for only He can satisfy our innermost desire for life and eternity."

Pope Francis

HOMILY JANUARY 6, 2021

PARISH NOTICES:

COVID 19 Security - When you come to Mass:

Now that we have been allowed to move from private prayer to being able to celebrate Mass together please remember to do so safely. 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 by being careful.

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ If you wish to wear a face mask you may do this – but please bring your own.
- ✓ 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 remove your mask just before approaching for Holy Communion and then replace afterwards.

- ✓ You will receive instructions for coming forward for Holy Communion. But please respect distancing (don't bunch), move for Communion using the one-way system, please stretch out your arms fully as you request Holy Communion, you will not be invited to speak "Amen" before receiving Holy Communion. These will need to be kept in mind at first and we do need to remember they, though not the best liturgy, are about distancing and staying well.
 - ✓ Holy Communion must be received only on the hand. (No gloves, please)
 - ✓ 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.
 - ✓ Please do greet other people outside church – but remember to distance yourself and do not meet in groups that are obviously more than six.
- 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.

- **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.)

Thursday: On Tuesday you wrote that *"the relief of ordinary time helps us put the richness of what we have learned over the Advent & Christmas scriptures into every day practice."*

I was struck when I read of the flight into Egypt that Joseph was told: "take the Child with you". Did he really need to be told this! ? Perhaps the evangelist was reminding us that as we leave the Christmas story we too must "take the Child" with us to remind ourselves that he was born of a woman; that he had to learn how to live in his world and understand it; how to deal with bereavement, challenge and fatigue; and especially how to pray in desperate times "take this chalice from me" and to cry out: " My God why have you deserted me?" Indeed, one like us in every way ...and hence compassionate.

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Peter Brownwood	Who is worried about his health – but progressing well.
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 (<i>Not Covid-19</i>) (and family: Kathryn, Mary & Rachael)	<i>Paul has arrived back at his unit from the general hospital. It is much easier to communicate with the special unit and they appreciate how important contact with family is for people in such situations. Kathryn was allowed to visit Paul yesterday – he was tired but good – though they had to sit 2 metres apart (Have you measured that?) Things are looking up, now – and he is has not got COVID – 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?

Our School Staff	<i>Who have broken up for a holiday – and other teachers.</i>
Clare and Pete Cobb's glorious music	<i>they have sung us through Covid; it's been a joy – and still is!</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	<i>Well done for breakthroughs</i>