

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

21st February 2021

First Sunday of Lent

Forty-eighth Sunday of Isolation

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com

Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk

Third Lockdown



*The Spirit drove Jesus
out into the wilderness
and
he remained there
for forty days,
and was tempted by Satan.*

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:

Diocesan Education Course: In case you didn't see Elaine's new year second report – see below

Mass Sermons: If you hear interesting things in Sunday sermons streamed – pass them on to us.

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)

Genesis 9:8-15

God spoke to Noah and his sons, 'See, I establish my Covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; also with every living creature to be found with you, birds, cattle and every wild beast with you: everything that came out of the ark, everything that lives on the earth. I establish my Covenant with you: no thing of flesh shall be swept away again by the waters of the flood. There shall be no flood to destroy the earth again.'

God said, 'Here is the sign of the Covenant I make between myself and you and every living creature with you for all generations: I set my bow in the clouds and it shall be a sign of the Covenant between me and the earth. When I gather the clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the Covenant between myself and you and every living creature of every kind. And so the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all things of flesh.'

Mark 1:12-15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels looked after him.

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. 'The time has come' he said 'and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.'

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

All the first three Gospels contain this event which we always proclaim on the first Sunday of Lent. Being year B of the lectionary we have Mark's account which is, as we have now come to expect from Mark, very short. St Luke and St Matthew contain more details which lead us to see that Jesus, like all humanity, suffers from the basic temptation of preferring to be 'someone else', 'somewhere else' and 'in another time' at stages of our lives – especially if it becomes uncomfortable to be who God has created us to be! (It would be a good exercise to look up and compare all three accounts)

So what can we take, particularly, from Mark's short account – it is two short sentences!

Just to add another aspect of difference in the style of these accounts we only need to look at certain words. (I am only quoting the Jerusalem translation we use in church). Matthew says: 'Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness....'. Luke says: 'Filled with the Holy Spirit Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness....'. In Mark's account today we hear:

“The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness.....”

This feels much more threatening, doesn't it? The translators suggest that even this word is a little weak for the original and could be replaced with 'the Spirit hurls him out into the desert....'

It does remind me of my mother who used to tell us, gently but firmly, 'if you are still at home when you're 25 I'll throw you out – you're not going to turn out like.....' (We all left before that!)

The question is 'what is happening to Jesus?'

This is not a simple theological discussion about how Jesus can experience temptation because temptation is not sinful – though this is true. It is about how he deals with temptation so that we may benefit, also.

What is happening to Jesus is that, at a fairly late stage of life for the age, he is answering his Father's call to ministry. In Mark's breathless and fast-moving storyline Jesus has begun his preparation by spending time with John the Baptist and his community and work. John is unexpectedly taken away and executed and Jesus, suddenly, is faced with the panic of reality – what should he do in the face of this temptation to panic? In Mark's account Jesus is not 'led gently forward and massaged into fulfilling his vocation' – or at least it doesn't feel like that to him.

Mark suggests that, to Jesus, it must have felt like he was being: 'hurled onwards by the Spirit'!

All the Gospels are an invitation to become 'Church' – to accept Jesus' call to be active disciples (Not just 'registered baptised') The Gospels are not just the story of Jesus – they are also the story of those who met him. For a few moments put yourself into Mark's mind as he writes the story of Jesus. He may well be reflecting on how he feels he has been 'hurled by the Spirit....', but wishes to share with us the difficulties and glories this has brought about for him.

I remember, years ago, that my brother took me into my first Indian Restaurant (in Church Street in Preston). (Before that we had 'Vesta' curries – remember them? Nasty and all tasted the same!) He led me to the place, opened the door for me, spoke to the staff, asked if he should order, then showed me how to eat. It was great, memorable and painless. It also, I think, allowed me to have the courage to lead others into different style restaurants - even in foreign lands!

Sometimes responding to God's call is gentle, comes with training and the company of others.

But **SOMETIMES** we are just 'hurled forwards by the Spirit'. This is not something we volunteer for easily, but in the Gospel today we find it is Just as true for Jesus the Christ, Son of God and Saviour! Lent is a time to ask him for courage by accompanying us.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2021

"In our Lenten journey towards Easter, let us remember the One who "humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). During this season of conversion, let us renew our faith, draw from the "living water" of hope, and receive with open hearts the love of God, who makes us brothers and sisters in Christ."

Pope Francis

MESSAGE FOR LENT 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

(Pope Francis: Evangelii Gaudium)

"The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. The Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems.

I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us "Give them something to eat"

I think that we should have this in **large** letters on the doors of our churches.

Tuesday:

You write: "We do have to read carefully, and above all, listen to what God is saying about himself, rather than insisting on how we expect God to be!"

How true! Our ideas of God, often formed in childhood, do tend to make God in our image. These ideas, when expressed in the limited medium of our English Language, is of a person - "HIMself". This "person" responds like us to situations but with immense power (How we need to reflect on: 'My ways are not your ways'). This power is seen in the Genesis account of the flood. But the God revealed in Jesus - only dimly glimpsed, a first inkling- is to be seen in the story of Noah. It is of a God who saves; who puts us together again when we are broken, who 'makes all things new'. It is this understanding of the flood that distinguishes the Genesis account from the many striking stories of catastrophic floods in the ancient world.

Sunday:

Morning all ! Happy Lord's day! Jane. I just wanted to let you know we have signed up for the walk for water CAFOD fundraiser too. I couldn't see a way of connecting the 'just giving page' to a 'team' or to St. John's but I may have missed it ? Xxx



CAFOD Walk for Water – Lent Parish Challenge 2021

Abdella is 23 and he has big dreams. He dreams of starting a small business. He dreams of starting a family. He dreams of having his own home. He dreams of the day he won't have to walk ten hours to get water.

Abdella lives in Afar, Ethiopia – one of the hottest places on earth. Like hundreds of people in the area, he spends most of the day walking to get water for his family to drink.

He knows that if there was water near his home, his family wouldn't have to worry any more about getting enough to stay alive. And he could start on the dreams he has for the rest of his life.

A Call for the Parish:

Please come together this Lent to do something different and help end water poverty.

A number of people from our parish and school community have already signed up to 'Walk with Abdella' and take part in the 'Walk for Water' challenge. I was inspired by the oldest member of my family, Paul Bradley (84) who is the CAFOD representative for our parish for more than 40 years...he has tirelessly campaigned to end poverty and raised thousands for campaigns such as this. This year I will be walking with the youngest member of my family, Jude (18 months). We will be walking 10,000 steps a day for 40 days and hope for our parish to raise a record amount for CAFOD. I know we can't do much at the moment but this is something we CAN do whether you want to challenge yourself, your family or others within our community (please see below link to get signed up) or want to support others taking on the challenge please email me janemaryschofield@gmail.com and I can let you know who's taking part and you can donate directly to their page. Thank you, Jane.

<https://walk.cafod.org.uk>

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Helen Coffey RIP	Margaret Blaney's Cousin in America who died recently
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.

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

Our School Staff	
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>

DIOCESAN ADULT EDUCATION COURSE: Spring Term week 2

"The glory of God is a human being fully alive" – St Irenaeus

As far as we know, spiritual development is what sets humans apart from the animal kingdom. However, our faith is not just about spiritual development – it is about becoming fully human – and this encompasses our physical, emotional, cognitive, social and spiritual development. John's Gospel has Jesus say: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10) . What God wants for us is the fullness of life – in all its essential aspects. Because our God is a God who reveals, we have God's own self-revelation in the scriptures and in Jesus to help us.

Reading through the psalms we become aware of a range of human emotions – praise, thanksgiving, joy, sorrow, despair, longing. Although we might not wish God to "smite our enemies", I am sure we have all experienced times in our lives when things seemed to be stacked against us and we needed God "on our side". In the Old Testament we have stories of God's dealings with his people – how they needed time to develop in their understanding and knowledge of who God was, and how all the time God was leading and forming his people, until they were able to enter into the covenant relationship that God wanted for them: "You will be my people and I will be your God" (Jer 31:33) . Even after that, all did not go well – there were "ups" and "downs" – but always God was there, wanting his people to come back to Him.

As we know, in the end God sent His Son - his final self-revelation. Think of how Jesus dealt with people – he was particularly concerned for people on the margins of society, those who were shunned for one reason or another, those who were poor or in some kind of need. However, he still mixed with tax-collectors, scribes and Pharisees – engaging with them in discussion and debate. We know well that Jesus challenged the faith of the scribes and Pharisees – trying to lead them forward from a very narrow, rule-driven understanding of the Law – but were they ready or willing to change? The healing stories are a good example of how Jesus dealt with people in a holistic way. Think of the man who was possessed not just by one devil but by a "legion, for there are many of us" (Mk 5: 1-20) or the woman who had suffered from constant haemorrhaging for years, or the leper in last Sunday's Gospel. These are all people who had been excluded from society, considered to be "unclean", prevented from worshipping in the synagogue or being part of normal family and community life. When Jesus heals – he heals the whole person and restores them to life. They must still adhere to the regulations to show they are now cured but now they can return to their families, live again within the community and worship together with others. Their isolation is over. They have been healed physically, socially, emotionally, and as they later reflect on what has happened to them, no doubt spiritually and cognitively as well. Faith is about the **whole person**, it is not a separate dimension. It is, as Wilfrid Cantrell Boyce said, "an orientation of the **total person**".

This is good news for us – there is nothing that is truly human that is outside the concern of Jesus and his/our Father.

Elaine Brownwood