

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

24th February 2021

Wednesday of the First Week of Lent

Forty-eighth Wednesday of Isolation

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com

Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk

Third Lockdown



*God saw their efforts to renounce their evil
behaviour,
and God relented*

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:

Stations of the Cross: I have added the first two Stations of the cross from St John's in today's Virus Times for you to pray on this week of Lent. You may have your favourite Station reflections, there are many on-line, or simply read the Gospel account of the Passion.

Margaret Cuffe RIP: If you know this lady there is a message in the prayer section

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)

Jonah 3:1-10

The word of the Lord was addressed to Jonah: 'Up!' he said 'Go to Nineveh, the great city, and preach to them as I told you to.' Jonah set out and went to Nineveh in obedience to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was a city great beyond compare: it took three days to cross it. Jonah went on into the city, making a day's journey. He preached in these words, 'Only forty days more and Nineveh is going to be destroyed.' And the people of Nineveh believed in God; they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least. The news reached the king of Nineveh, who rose from his throne, took off his robe, put on sackcloth and sat down in ashes. A proclamation was then promulgated throughout Nineveh, by decree of the king and his ministers, as follows: 'Men and beasts, herds and flocks, are to taste nothing; they must not eat, they must not drink water. All are to put on sackcloth and call on God with all their might; and let everyone renounce his evil behaviour and the wicked things he has done. Who knows if God will not change his mind and relent, if he will not renounce his burning wrath, so that we do not perish?' God saw their efforts to renounce their evil behaviour, and God relented: he did not inflict on them the disaster which he had threatened.

Luke 11:29-32

The crowds got even bigger, and Jesus addressed them:

'This is a wicked generation; it is asking for a sign. The only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. On Judgement day the Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and there is something greater than Solomon here. On Judgement day the men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation and condemn it, because when Jonah preached they repented; and there is something greater than Jonah here.'

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

The Scripture readings this week seem to be chosen by the Church to help us discover how we can renew our vision of what Lent can be for us – rather than getting out the 'I do this in Lent' book we may have used for years. Today we are introduced to Jonah, who we have met not long ago I remember, to see what we can learn from him.

There is no doubt about the fact that Jonah did not want the job God was asking of him: was he frightened, lacking confidence, feeling poorly, depressed, or just idle? We don't know – and, really that doesn't matter.



“Up!”, says God – actually sounds like ‘shouts God’!
He is asked to go to Nineveh, the ‘Great City’.
He is to talk to the leaders and tell them to turn back to God.

There has been a great deal of archaeology on Nineveh in recent years and, indeed, it was a huge and powerful city. Why should Jonah have been excited at the prospect of ‘little him’ being able to achieve this unlikely outcome? He seems to have none of the abilities or training to be chosen for this task, and he may wonder how many better suited candidates have turned the task down if God is asking him!

He decides to hide at the ends of the earth where God won’t find him by boat. He must have moaned so much that the sailors chucked him over the side – well that’s one answer to Jonah’s problem!

But he gets swallowed by a big fish – what are the chances of that? – and then ‘spat up’ nearer Nineveh! (Sometimes we wonder if more effort goes into avoiding tasks than just doing it?)

Jonah approaches Nineveh with a definite lack of enthusiasm. He seems to approach the task like a teenager who has decided to ‘do it badly so that God won’t ask me again’?

He faces the King and leaders of Nineveh with a deal of surprise they have agreed to see him. I imagine he apologises for bothering them and says that God has a message for them which they probably won’t want to bother with!

This short story starts by looking like it is about Jonah – but there is no one more surprised than Jonah with what happens. The King receives the message and immediately:

“The king of Nineveh, rose from his throne, took off his robe, put on sackcloth and sat down in ashes. A proclamation was then promulgated throughout Nineveh, by decree of the king and his ministers, as follows:

‘Men and beasts, herds and flocks, are to taste nothing; they must not eat, they must not drink water. All are to put on sackcloth and call on God with all their might; and let everyone renounce his evil behaviour and the wicked things he has done.’”

The story is not about Jonah after all, but about God’s mercy!

Perhaps there are three messages for us as we enter Lent:

- God does call us and sometimes in ways we feel are not our strengths. Sometimes he has to shout ‘Up’ because we are waiting for a more suitable, a more ‘me’ call, and we can’t hear, run away or are paralysed. Are we open to God’s call in ways we didn’t expect? Maybe we are the best person for this work – surprisingly?
- Jonah seem utterly surprised that God’s message, delivered through little him, was accepted so surprisingly. God’s ways are often not our ways so perhaps we need to look behind us to notice that his work is happening – sometimes we see what we expect to see? Wait a while and watch?
- Jonah’s personal problem was that he sees himself at the centre of the world (We saw this with Adam and Eve a couple of weeks ago). Although this book is named after ‘Jonah’ Jonah himself realises that ‘his story’ is not really about him, but about God’s mercy. We are learning to read the Scriptures as being the ‘Word of God’ above all – perhaps, during Lent, we can practice seeing God about us rather than simply ourselves?

We may have found some helps for Lent in Jonah – but this is not the end of the story. You might have thought Jonah was pleased with the outcome of his efforts? Could I invite you to visit the final chapter of Jonah which is about Jonah’s response to all this.

It begins with the words: *“Jonah was very indignant at all this: he fell into a rage”!* (Jonah 4:1-11)

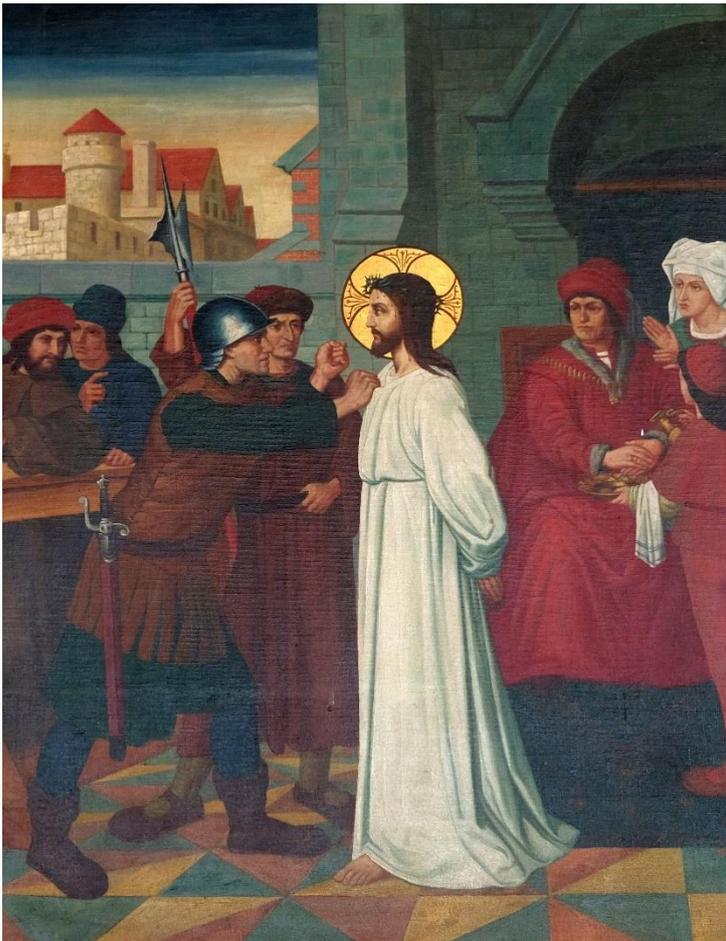
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2021

"Faith calls us to accept the truth and testify to it before God and all our brothers and sisters... Christ Himself is this truth. By taking on our humanity, even to its very limits, He has made Himself the way – demanding, yet open to all – that leads to the fullness of life."

Pope Francis

MESSAGE FOR LENT 2021

The Stations of the Cross



The First Station

Jesus is condemned to death



The Second Station

Jesus is given his Cross

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.



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:

<p>- Margaret Cuffe' RIP (Funeral at St Wulstan's on Friday)</p>	<p>We have received this message from the family of Margaret Cuffe: To the SVP. I want to thank you on behalf of all the Cuffe family for your card, for arranging a Mass and for your thought and prayers.</p>
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	<p>The SVP was a very important part of Mum's life and of Dad's life too and we know they made many friendships through it.</p> <p>We are sorry that due to Covid we are not able to have you join us at Mum's funeral. If you would like to participate virtually I send the details below, with all best wishes, Philomena and the family.</p> <p>- Margaret Cuffe's funeral on Friday 26th Feb at 1 pm will be streamed online at the time .</p> <p>The stream can be accessed on channel 3 of https://briandavidfilms.co.uk/livestream/channel3 using the password 4738. The password will not work until the start of the service at 1pm.</p> <p>Please share this link with anyone who would like to have it.</p>
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>