

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

25th February 2021

Thursday of the First Week of Lent

Forty-eighth Thursday of Isolation

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com

Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk

Third Lockdown



*'As for ourselves,
save us by your hand,
and come to my help,
for I am alone
and have no one but you, Lord.'*

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:

CAFOD Family Fast Day: is tomorrow.

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)

Esther 4:17

Queen Esther took refuge with the Lord in the mortal peril which had overtaken her. She besought the Lord God of Israel in these words:

*'My Lord, our King, the only one,
come to my help, for I am alone
and have no helper but you
and am about to take my life in my hands.
'I have been taught from my earliest years, in the bosom of my family,
that you, Lord, chose
Israel out of all the nations
and our ancestors out of all the people of old times
to be your heritage for ever;
and that you have treated them as you promised.
'Remember, Lord; reveal yourself
in the time of our distress.
'As for me, give me courage,
King of gods and master of all power.
Put persuasive words into my mouth
when I face the lion;
change his feeling into hatred for our enemy,
that the latter and all like him may be brought to their end.
'As for ourselves, save us by your hand,
and come to my help, for I am alone
and have no one but you, Lord.'*

Matthew 7:7-12

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him. Is there a man among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or would hand him a snake when he asked for a fish? If you, then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

'So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets.'

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

The Church seems to be using various sections of Mass scripture to provide us with tools to make Lent new for us – this doesn't mean they are new to this Lent, but that it is easy for us to expect of Lent what we expect of Lent and miss things! So today we have a section of the book of Esther – which may be unknown to many of us?

'Esther' is a name that has come back into fashion in recent years with younger people. I was reminded today of Auntie Esther, grandma's sister, who was one of those ladies (In the 1960s I expect) who used to come to visit, stay all afternoon, and for tea, but never ever removed her hat!

Anyway, here we are speaking of another Esther from an ordinary background who, after having a sad family background, finally became the Queen of Persia.

After the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem after the Exile, and beginning to rebuild the Temple, we find that this is not the whole story of God's people. Many groups of people, and families, did not return but became the new shoots of God's people in other parts of the world. (This is not the only time this has happened to the Jewish people). Esther was a member of such a family who remained in the land of Persia. Esther, particularly, became a great leader.

We are not sure who wrote this book of which Esther is the 'star' ('Esther' means 'star'), but the original Hebrew version is unique in that it doesn't mention the name of God once – nor does it mention the Temple, Jewish laws, sacrifice and other issues which you would think were essential to Judaism. Interestingly, when it was translated into Greek the name of God was inserted as you can see from our Jerusalem Bible version here. This is strange, but significant as a message which may be a tool for our Lenten practice.

The whole of this short work is about the presence of God amongst his people. If you read it without mention of the name of God his presence and his work, especially in times of tribulation and need, is still evident. It is almost saying 'even if you don't mention his name it doesn't take away his presence'.

Whilst this is true, it is almost necessary to point to God when his work is noticed – if only to thank him and to make **me** feel better (we know he doesn't **need** our thanks!). We know there are people in our lives who don't need our thanks – but they do like to be acknowledged! (The difference is that they will let us know!)

So, though the original text didn't need to mention the name of God, those who followed needed to point to his presence – like putting a transparent sheet over the original with notes written on (I'm desperately trying to think of an example for this – any thoughts? (*PowerPoint?*)). Plus the fact that some readers might need help to see below the story – and who could help them? Those in the future may need help in seeing how God has worked in the past to be able to cope with the now?

We are being encouraged to see below, and above, the experiences of our lives – especially when our experience is difficult – to notice God is there all the time. We need to practice this – maybe Lent is a good time to look beyond?

Sometimes we need time. Most people look back and realise that an experience is not quite the same as they remembered. We can notice outcomes and attribute these to 'coincidence'. As people of Faith we may attribute these coincidences to the work of God we had not foreseen or noticed at the time. A friend of mine calls these revelations: 'God-incidences'.

But what if we were better at noticing God now and all the time – rather than waiting some time? Philosophically we will agree that God is 'there' all the time – but how can we practice noticing him? Maybe this is one of the uses of Lent?

The book of Esther challenges us to live as if God was simply part of our daily life – part of our family – part of our decision-making. As if we didn't need to mention his presence. But, actually, pointing to God is both part of our good manners and it also helps others see better!

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2021

"Hope as 'living water' enabling us to continue our journey... Hoping with Him and because of Him means believing that history does not end with our mistakes, our violence and injustice, or the sin that crucifies Love. It means receiving from His open heart the Father's forgiveness."

Pope Francis

MESSAGE FOR LENT 2021

The Stations of the Cross – (Next ones next Wednesday)

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 not 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:</p> <p>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> <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>
<p>Helen Coffey RIP</p>	<p>Margaret Blaney's Cousin in America who died recently</p>
<p>Peter Brownwood</p>	<p>Who is worried about his health – but progressing well.</p>
<p>Various Older People we worry about</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>From Jayne Clark</p>	<p>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.</p>

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

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