

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

26th February 2021

Friday of the First Week of Lent

Forty-eighth Friday of Isolation

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com

Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk

Third Lockdown



*When the sinner renounces sin
to become law-abiding and honest,
he deserves to live.*

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 today.

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)

Ezekiel 18:21-28

Thus says the Lord:

'If the wicked man renounces all the sins he has committed, respects my laws and is law-abiding and honest, he will certainly live; he will not die. All the sins he committed will be forgotten from then on; he shall live because of the integrity he has practised. What! Am I likely to take pleasure in the death of a wicked man – it is the Lord who speaks – and not prefer to see him renounce his wickedness and live?

'But if the upright man renounces his integrity, commits sin, copies the wicked man and practises every kind of filth, is he to live? All the integrity he has practised shall be forgotten from then on; but this is because he himself has broken faith and committed sin, and for this he shall die. But you object, "What the Lord does is unjust." Listen, you House of Israel: is what I do unjust? Is it not what you do that is unjust? When the upright man renounces his integrity to commit sin and dies because of this, he dies because of the evil that he himself has committed. When the sinner renounces sin to become law-abiding and honest, he deserves to live. He has chosen to renounce all his previous sins; he shall certainly live; he shall not die.'

Matthew 5:20-26

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

'You have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you: anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court; if a man calls his brother "Fool" he will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and if a man calls him "Renegade" he will answer for it in hell fire. So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering. Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. I tell you solemnly, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny.'

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

One of the games I like to play in reading the daily scripture is to notice 'words you have not heard in a sentence recently'. On Wednesday we had 'spurn', today someone mentioned 'renegade'. But the one which held my attention in Ezekiel today, many times, was 'integrity'

'Integrity refers to the wholeness of something – does it 'work together?', is it what it says it is?'. God is inviting us to be who we think and say we are – in a whole way?

I am reminded of my first car, given to me by a couple in my first parish. It was a Ford Cortina Mark I similar to the picture here – except not so shiny and rusty green with a blue bonnet and a blue boot! Classy!



In a basic way it did what it said it would – it drove. But there was a lot of rust, cross-ply tyres, it made a noise and smoke and I was aware that it was gassing me inside the car – but it was a car!. Eventually the exhaust was beginning to fall off and the local garage man put it on the ‘lift’. I asked ‘what can you do?’ I remember his answer his answer: ‘If I were you , I wouldn’t touch anything at all as there are so many things wrong that one thing will bring off another!’ It lasted another few weeks.

My first car had ‘lost its integrity’ (I’m not sure it had any as long as I owned it?)

And so Ezekiel speaks for God and invites his people to look at their integrity. We can look shiny and polished, but it could be a Lenten task to do an MOT!

To be fair, we are often aware of the ‘well maintained’ parts of our lives and also of our weaknesses and rust – but perhaps the task is to see how these work together as the ‘full me’. How am I as the person God created me to be?

It is also true that we can be aware of the lack of other people’s ‘integrity’ despite the evident strengths of their personalities and that has an affect on their relationships with others.

God is able to see our lack of integrity, even when we are able to avoid admitting it. The good news is that God is ready to offer his help, and also ready to forgive. We, however, are not as ready to accept others – but more than this, we can continue to be blind to our own areas of integrity loss.

If we are to be better disciples of Jesus, which must be the point of Lent, then we need to understand the meaning of this ‘integrity’ in ourselves, in the nation and in the Church. This is why it is the word for today.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2021

"Love, following in the footsteps of Christ, in concern and compassion for all, is the highest expression of our faith and hope... Love rejoices in seeing others grow. Hence it suffers when others are anguished, lonely, sick, homeless, despised or in need. Love is a leap of the heart; it brings us out of ourselves and creates bonds of sharing and communion."

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 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: ("like putting a transparent sheet over the original with notes written on") You have reminded me of a small book I got in Rome many, many years ago. Rome Past and Present with reconstructions of ancient monuments. The inside was ring bound. There are pictures of e.g. The Colosseum, as it was at the time the book was published, overlaid by a clear sheet on which the missing parts were reproduced to show it as it probably was originally. I feel that it would be so helpful to know what the original scriptures meant to the people who received them originally but I am sure that God makes sure that we know enough for our own personal salvation and I suppose that is what really matters.

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:

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>