

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

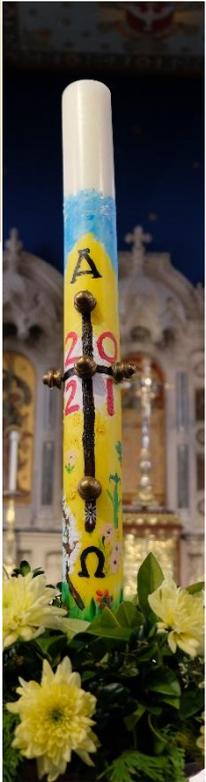
7th April 2021

Easter Wednesday

Fifty-fourth Wednesday of Isolation

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com

Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk



Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

Mass during the week:

Saturday Easter Vigil	8.00pm	St John's
Easter Tuesday	9.30am	St John's
Easter Wednesday	9.30am	St Martin's
Easter Thursday -	9.30am	St John's
Easter Friday -	9.30am	St John's
Easter Saturday -	6.00pm	St John's

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

Acts 3:1-10

Once, when Peter and John were going up to the Temple for the prayers at the ninth hour, it happened that there was a man being carried past. He was a cripple from birth; and they used to put him down every day near the Temple entrance called the Beautiful Gate so that he could beg from the people going in. When this man saw Peter and John on their way into the Temple he begged from them. Both Peter and John looked straight at him and said, 'Look at us.' He turned to them expectantly, hoping to get something from them, but Peter said, 'I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!' Peter then took him by the hand and helped him to stand up. Instantly his feet and ankles became firm, he jumped up, stood, and began to walk, and he went with them into the Temple, walking and jumping and praising God. Everyone could see him walking and praising God, and they recognised him as the man who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. They were all astonished and unable to explain what had happened to him.

Luke 24:13-35

Two of the disciples of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, 'What matters are you discussing as you walk along?' They stopped short, their faces downcast.

Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days.' 'What things?' he asked. 'All about Jesus of Nazareth' they answered 'who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.'

Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.

When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening' they said 'and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

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

Keep a look-out for: How often the events of the 'Acts of the Apostles' reflect, almost exactly, events involving Jesus in the Gospels. It is only a few weeks since we had the Gospel story of the man waiting for the waters to be disturbed who was then told to walk away by Jesus!

We get used to light switches and things happening almost instantaneously (good word for a cold Wednesday morning?). We are reminded in the Easter Gospels how the realisation of what the resurrection means takes time!

The writers of the Gospels wanted to express to themselves, and to us, “How we got to this understanding of our faith in the risen Jesus”. This is, surely, what we should be doing when we are doing what Christians are called to do: Evangelise – share our experience of the Good News of Jesus.

So this fantastic Gospel passage is outlining the process that is gone through, over and over again, by all disciples of Jesus. (We can say ‘we’ as we read their particular image)

- The story begins with the clear message that it involves **Disciples** of Jesus who are sharing their faith which is fractured by recent events. They are ‘talking together’. Here, in 2021, we are disciples of Jesus.
- Firstly, we have concerns, lack of understanding, worries, even anger at what is happening in the world about us. We can even grow in anger as the world around us does not match what **we**, no ‘I’, would like it to be. The Gospel passage gives us permission, ‘demands’, that we share this ‘concern’, or ‘anger’, mainly ‘heavy disappointment’ with Jesus!!! He will let us do the talking, not interrupt, not criticise (well not yet, anyway). Jesus is a risen Lord who listens (Which might be different from ourselves, we may discover!). Part of our training in discipleship is to take our disappointment to Jesus – he makes the decision to ‘walk by our side’!
- Jesus then reminds us of how God sees the situations which are disappointing us. We do have to continue to walk beside him and remember all that we have been told before – but we weren’t listening or were distracted because of our fear. If we are disciples (There is a presumption of this) we will need to hear God’s Word and let it enlighten us as it represents the way God sees the world – not my way! This is why we have been fed with God’s Word through the Prophets each day during Lent – we will read them again, of course.
- Whatever was happening to these disciples during the walk - they were interested. They were glued to his every word and his ability to paint a different story from the events of the last few days which had weighed them down in disappointment. Jesus was making connections for these disciples which excited them. They would eventually say:

Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?’

It is good to name those times when our hearts burned within us!

- They were so excited they used the excuse of the dark to persuade him to stay with them. They ate with him. They obviously invited Jesus to say the regular blessing of the food – and this flipped their minds: they recognised all this event as the presence of their Jesus – but he vanished from their sight. (Jesus didn’t suddenly ‘change into Mass mode’ at this stage, it was part of the whole sign-filled experience which said ‘breaking bread’)
- The darkness which they had used to persuade Jesus to stay (It is dangerous!) seems to hold no fear now! They went, then and there, to Jerusalem!
- When they arrived at the rest of the community they realised they were not the only ones who had the ‘scoop’! But their experience, and their faith, was supported by the others.

This experience of these particular Disciples of Jesus continues in us to this very day. Please spend some time reflecting how you have gone through this cycle in faith in your life – sometimes in unusual and terrifying times, but also quite regularly as we celebrate the Eucharist together weekly. Our appreciation of what it means for Jesus to be risen from death continues to grow as we hear God’s word, share our faith with other disciples, and recognise him in the breaking of bread together.

Our concerns and worries will also look different as we allow Jesus to share his view of the world, and our lives, with us and feeds us to go out in his name. “How did you get to your appreciation of faith?”

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2021

"In the light of the Risen Lord, our sufferings are now transfigured. Where there was death, now there is life. Where there was mourning, now there is consolation. In embracing the cross, Jesus bestowed meaning on our sufferings and now we pray that the benefits of that healing will spread throughout the world."

Pope Francis

Easter 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.)

Easter Sunday

Reading the virus times today, it occurred to me that I had never thought about the 'disciple Jesus loved' as BOTH a real, living companion of Jesus and a symbol - rather than one or the other.

As you say in the virus times, 'one of the most telling explanations is that this figure, who 'sees and believes' alongside Peter, even in a simplistic beginning way, is YOU (or me, or your child, your mother, your next door neighbour..... – the person Jesus loves and draws forward in faith to appreciate the resurrection).'

So, I've been thinking about the fact that whoever the disciple was - (John?) - it is their friendship and closeness to Jesus 'the man' which means they believe first, even if they feel hesitant. For me, your commentary points out that calling them 'the one Jesus loved' was deliberately ambiguous. There's probably a lot more to this ambiguity which I don't know enough about the context of the Gospels to 'get,' but - for me-it also serves the purpose of situating 'us', now in 2021, in that scene. As you say, there's a timelessness to it which connects our own narratives as Catholic Christians in 2021 to that moment at the tomb.

I've also realised I now need to go back and read the beloved disciple's place - 'here is your mother' at the crucifixion in a new way too.

Wednesday

The Meaning of the Cross

Thank you for your powerful reflection on today's (*Wednesday's*) scriptures. You wrote:

"He (Jesus) is handing control to the one who he knows can see clearly: His Father"

I have always had difficulty in accepting the idea of a God who demands the sacrifice of his only Son to atone, as we have seen it, for all the sins of the world. The God who corrected Abraham from the mistaken idea of sacrificing his only Isaac now demands the death of his Son. Surely not!

In Mark's Gospel, we see the gradual abandonment of Jesus by everyone until he stands alone before Pilate where he declares his divinity and says you would have no power over me if it were not given to you by my Father.

The life and death of Jesus challenges us to look at what power means in my life and how it is exercised by ourselves and others. "You know that those regarded as rulers of the pagans ...lord it over them ... it shall not be this way with you" (Mk Ch 10)

If we want to see what God is like, the God revealed by Jesus, we need to look and see his Son hanging helplessly from the cross. The ones in control jeered: "If you are the Son of God – come down". Exercise your power for your own ends!

The only power Jesus understands is the power of love, of service, which comes from his Father. To remain was the only possible response he could make. It is this power that can bring us freedom, the freedom of the Spirit; the freedom from the need to be always in control; freedom from the sin of pride - the 'sin of the world', forever defeated in the death of Jesus. It is no wonder that Pilate was disturbed.

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Andrew McIvor RIP	A tortured young man I know – also for his parents, wife and teenage son, please.
Keith Milton-Barker	Has died more quickly than the family had expected. Funeral will be at St John's on Easter Saturday, 10 th April at 11am (limited COVID numbers – invitations by family only)
Alan Clews has gone into hospital	Prayers, please.
Maroulla	Many of you will know her from morning Mass. She is having a serious operation and has asked for your prayers.
Peter Brownwood	Who is worried about his health – but progressing 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>