

# St John the Evangelist, Poulton

8<sup>th</sup> April 2021

## Easter Thursday

### Fifty-fourth Thursday of Isolation

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Parish Website: [www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk](http://www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk)



*'Why are you so surprised at this?'*

#### **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](http://www.universalis.com))

#### **Acts 3:11-26**

Everyone came running towards Peter and John in great excitement, to the Portico of Solomon, as it is called, where the man was still clinging to Peter and John. When Peter saw the people he addressed them, 'Why are you so surprised at this? Why are you staring at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or holiness? You are Israelites, and it is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, who has glorified his servant Jesus, the same Jesus you handed over and then disowned in the presence of Pilate after Pilate had decided to release him. It was you who accused the Holy One, the Just One, you who demanded the reprieve of a murderer while you killed the prince of life. God, however, raised him from the dead, and to that fact we are the witnesses; and it is the name of Jesus which, through our faith in it, has brought back the strength of this man whom you see here and who is well known to you. It is faith in that name that has restored this man to health, as you can all see.

'Now I know, brothers, that neither you nor your leaders had any idea what you were really doing; this was the way God carried out what he had foretold, when he said through all his prophets that his Christ would suffer. Now you must repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, and so that the Lord may send the time of comfort. Then he will send you the Christ he has predestined, that is Jesus, whom heaven must keep till the universal restoration comes which God proclaimed, speaking through his holy prophets. Moses, for example, said: The Lord God will raise up a prophet like myself for you, from among your own brothers; you must listen to whatever he tells you. The man who does not listen to that prophet is to be cut off from the people. In fact, all the prophets that have ever spoken, from Samuel onwards, have predicted these days.

'You are the heirs of the prophets, the heirs of the covenant God made with our ancestors when he told Abraham: in your offspring all the families of the earth will be blessed. It was for you in the first place that God raised up his servant and sent him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.'

#### **Luke 24:35-48**

The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised Jesus at the breaking of bread.

They were still talking about all this when Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!' In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and feet. Their joy was so great that they still could not believe it, and they stood there dumbfounded; so he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes.

Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms has to be fulfilled.' He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.'

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

**Keep a look-out for:** How full of life the disciples are now that they have received the Spirit of Jesus. This excitement is caught by the people listening and they come running. Their excited interest allows the disciples to be quite blunt with those listening: "When Peter saw the people he addressed them, 'Why are you so surprised at this?'"

Anyway: When we come to the Gospel accounts of the resurrection we can overlook how used to these stories we have become – we must ensure we see the small messages:

Today's passage follows yesterday's and begins by reminding us that the resurrection of Jesus has brought all his followers together – this is significant and not obvious!:

*The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road  
and how they had recognised Jesus at the breaking of bread.*

Like them, we cannot be disciples of Jesus on our own – we need to gather. This last year will have done us some damage, individually and as a community, in stopping us, as disciples, gathering in all sorts of settings. We have gone out of our way to 'keep in touch' through reading the daily scriptures, watching live-streamed Mass somewhere, sharing the parish 'Virus Times', being part of the parish WhatsApp group etc – but 'gathering is an important activity in the resurrection Gospels.

When Jesus appears the disciples, again, have difficulty recognising him and are afraid. Jesus uses ways of re-making his connections with them: he eats, encourages them to touch him, above all he shows them the marks of his passion and death! This will become his 'COVID Vaccine Passport' (sort of) as the disciples move forward in speaking to others and convincing them that the re=appearance of Jesus is not a magic trick – he really did die on the cross!!!

Two lines in this Gospel always catch my eye:

**Firstly:**       *"Their joy was so great  
that they still could not believe it,  
and they stood there dumbfounded;"*

What? They were joyful in seeing him – but they didn't believe it? Sometimes we have no understanding of what is happening, but we are certain our experience is real! (Another Easter question: Why does 'green & black's' chocolate taste so good? I have no idea why it's better than most others – but my mouth is sure it's true!). It is always useful to clarify a passage by looking at an alternative translation. A more literal translation is:

*"As they still didn't believe  
(It was too good to be true),  
they were just marvelling, Jesus said:  
"Do you have anything to eat here?"...."*

Sometimes we 'know' without understanding, don't we?

HOWEVER! St Luke is telling us clearly that this 'knowledge' is NOT simply a 'feeling' that 'Jesus is very much with us as we gather' – their experience is much more precise, real and concrete than this – he insists on inviting them to touch and to find something for him to eat to eat!

**Secondly:**     *"everything written about me  
in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms has to be fulfilled.'  
He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures."*

Jesus does not want his followers to make the same mistake as his disciples before his passion and be ignorant of the Word of God – the Prophets and the psalms. He invites them, as they are obviously still shaky, to return to the scriptures so that they will begin to understand as well as experience the resurrection of Jesus. St Jerome clearly proclaimed that "ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ" – as usual, Jesus said it first here to the disciples.

Notice how important Jesus's life, passion, death and resurrection fulfils the scriptural promises from God. This, as well as his bodily wounds of passion and death, are vital for our way forward as disciples. From very early days the Church has insisted in adding "...in accordance with the scriptures" when speaking of the life of Jesus and who he is in Creeds and other doctrinal productions. If we cannot show this "accordance with the scriptures" we could be making Jesus up for our own good!

Finally, but worryingly for us disciples, Jesus concludes this visit by outlining the meaning of the resurrection:

*“So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”*

In their ‘dumbfounded’ or ‘marvelling’ state they must have replied to the Lord: ‘Yes we see now!’ And Jesus slides in, very quickly: *“You are witnesses to this.”*

As baptised disciples we hear him say this to us, too. Now the work begins!

THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 2021

*“The risen Christ is hope for all who continue to suffer from the pandemic, both the sick and those who have lost a loved one. May the Lord give them comfort and sustain the valiant efforts of doctors and nurses... The crucified and risen Lord is comfort for those who have lost their jobs or experience serious economic difficulties and lack adequate social protection... The risen Jesus bears the marks of the wounds in his hands, feet and side. These wounds are the everlasting seal of his love for us. All those who experience a painful trial in body or spirit can find refuge in these wounds and, through them, receive the grace of the hope that does not disappoint.”*

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](http://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](mailto: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 <sup>th</sup> 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?

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