

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

10th April 2021

Easter Saturday

Fifty-fourth Saturday of Isolation

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com

Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk



The rulers, elders and scribes were astonished at the assurance shown by Peter and John, considering they were uneducated laymen;

Mass during the week:

Easter Saturday –	6.00pm	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	St John's

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

Acts 4:13-21

The rulers, elders and scribes were astonished at the assurance shown by Peter and John, considering they were uneducated laymen; and they recognised them as associates of Jesus; but when they saw the man who had been cured standing by their side, they could find no answer. So they ordered them to stand outside while the Sanhedrin had a private discussion. 'What are we going to do with these men?' they asked. 'It is obvious to everybody in Jerusalem that a miracle has been worked through them in public, and we cannot deny it. But to stop the whole thing spreading any further among the people, let us caution them never to speak to anyone in this name again.'

So they called them in and gave them a warning on no account to make statements or to teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John retorted, 'You must judge whether in God's eyes it is right to listen to you and not to God. We cannot promise to stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard.' The court repeated the warnings and then released them; they could not think of any way to punish them, since all the people were giving glory to God for what had happened.

Mark 16:9-15

Having risen in the morning on the first day of the week, Jesus appeared first to Mary of Magdala from whom he had cast out seven devils. She then went to those who had been his companions, and who were mourning and in tears, and told them. But they did not believe her when they heard her say that he was alive and that she had seen him.

After this, he showed himself under another form to two of them as they were on their way into the country. These went back and told the others, who did not believe them either.

Lastly, he showed himself to the Eleven themselves while they were at table. He reproached them for their incredulity and obstinacy, because they had refused to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. And he said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation.'

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

Keep a look-out for: How much authority is given to the disciples after the resurrection, particularly as they were not trained in theology or have official standing in society.

Anyway: today's Gospel we see St Mark – he is always brief but this is often revealing.

Mark is the first Gospel to be written down and has gathered together the oral messages about the resurrection. As we know from our own family oral memory this gives the hearer an overall view of what was happening – and what it meant to those people.

The memories are not surprising, as we have heard them through the other evangelists this week. But what we do pick up is that the resurrected Jesus visits his friends individually (in a similar way to other Gospel descriptions) but then he visits the twelve together with a very different atmosphere! He 'reproached them for their lack of belief, together. This is a sign of the place of the twelve and the promise of bringing back together the twelve tribes of Israel. It is, also here, that this symbolic group

are sent out to proclaim the same Good News that Jesus was sent to do. This seem a little like moving forward into the Acts of the Apostles department, doesn't it?

The archeologically interesting issue here is that the earliest manuscripts of Mark's Gospel do not include today's passage. Most scholars regard this Gospel as ending before today's passage – at Mark 16:8, before the declaration of the resurrection – for effect.

This Gospel was read at the Easter Vigil this year and concluded then:

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid. END

Read this as the last page of an exciting short story within which many questions have been put to us: 'who is this Jesus?', 'Don't tell anyone' etc. You may be reading this as a disciple of Jesus, in which case you will know what happens next!

Or you may be someone with a passing interest.

Certainly these women didn't expect the resurrection – they wouldn't go out to anoint dead bodies that they didn't expect to be there!

We are left understanding that our body's response to a friend being suddenly murdered and then who's body is stolen would be 'trembling and bewilderment' – but, on reflection, these emotions are usually associated with a 'meeting God' event! After all that had happened they would be afraid to speak to anyone.

But this is a great, blunt ending to draw the reader on!

If you had already encountered the risen Jesus you would shout 'Hurray' and laugh understandingly, at the characters' lack of belief!

If you had not heard of the resurrection of Jesus you would leave asking: 'well, what happened next?' and the disciples of Jesus had them interested enough to begin with words such as: 'Well, we'll tell you what happened next – because those women didn't keep their mouths closed! – they became quite the opposite of afraid! – but you could have understand why they might not.

The outcome of the story is not intended to be in the written text, but in the witness of the disciples!

But it looks like, along the years, some bright sparks wanted to add a final ending using messages from the other Gospels. Future manuscripts suggest that two different ending were added. The first one seems powerful enough – and a clever catechetical passage!?! (A much better children's story!)

SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 2021

"May the light of the risen Jesus be a source of rebirth for migrants fleeing from war and extreme poverty. Let us recognize in their faces the marred and suffering face of the Lord as He walked the path to Calvary. May they never lack concrete signs of solidarity and human fraternity, a pledge of the victory of life over death."

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 Thursday **Mind the gap**

In reading the scriptures of Easter week we can easily forget the reverse 'gap' between the first and second readings. Meeting the risen Jesus, as the disciples did in the gospel accounts, filled them with awe, doubt, wonderings, joy...bewilderment even. What to do now? The answer: Do nothing! Soak up the experience, talk about it, wonder about it but do nothing. Why?

The experience of meeting the risen Jesus is not enough. There is a gap that had to be bridged for them and for each one of us. It is only truly bridged when we acknowledge that we are not fit for mission: that we need this "power from on high" that will equip us, as it did Peter, for mission. If we feel inadequate in the light of Peter's "stand up and walk" response to the cripple, we might ponder and ask the risen Jesus what do we now need to do personally and as a community if we are truly to become "witnesses to this".

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.
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>