

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

19th June 2021

Saturday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

Sixty-fourth Saturday of Isolation

Telephone: 01253 893184

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com

Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk

*“For it is when I am weak
that I am strong.”*

Mass during the week:

Saturday – 12 th Sunday of Year	6.00pm - Sunday Vigil Mass St John's
Tuesday -	9.30am – Mass at St John's
Wednesday -	9.30am – Mass at St Martin's
Thursday -	9.30am – Mass at St John's
Friday –	9.30am – Mass at St John's
Saturday – 13 th Sunday of Year	6.00pm - Sunday Vigil Mass St John's

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

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Must I go on boasting, though there is nothing to be gained by it? But I will move on to the visions and revelations I have had from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago, was caught up – whether still in the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows – right into the third heaven. I do know, however, that this same person – whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows – was caught up into paradise and heard things which must not and cannot be put into human language. I will boast about a man like that, but not about anything of my own except my weaknesses. If I should decide to boast, I should not be made to look foolish, because I should only be speaking the truth; but I am not going to, in case anyone should begin to think I am better than he can actually see and hear me to be.

In view of the extraordinary nature of these revelations, to stop me from getting too proud I was given a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan to beat me and stop me from getting too proud! About this thing, I have pleaded with the Lord three times for it to leave me, but he has said, 'My grace is enough for you: my power is at its best in weakness.' So I shall be very happy to make my weaknesses my special boast so that the power of Christ may stay over me, and that is why I am quite content with my weaknesses, and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and the agonies I go through for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong.

Matthew 6:24-34

Jesus said to his disciples: 'No one can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.

'That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it. Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing! Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are? Can any of you, for all his worrying, add one single cubit to his span of life? And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these. Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field which is there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you men of little faith? So do not worry; do not say, "What are we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed?" It is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.'

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

This letter has been a bit of a shock to Christians through the ages – what has happened to the great and powerful Paul? He is being criticised by those who followed him in Corinth, he seems to respond with a certain sarcasm, he is becoming worked up and retaliates by writing a list of boasts, and finally he admits that he has carried 'a thorn in the flesh' during recent years. He sounds like we can all sound at times when things do not go as smoothly as we would have liked and certainly worked towards!

This letter, however, does give us a unique insight into Paul which will not allow us (rather like it did with other people who met him) to regard Paul as a god – or a plaster statue saint (Though we may have done that because we haven't read the original scriptures as we should?)

Any damage this letter has done to Paul has highlighted his one central strength: It is Jesus the Christ who matters to Paul over anything else which his weaknesses may show up!

And so this passage allows Paul to speak of the importance of weakness – this is a gift for us to hold on to when we feel far less than strong or, even competent! Perhaps it has taken this long in his life to admit to saying – and on paper, too:

*So I shall be very happy to make my weaknesses my special boast
so that the power of Christ may stay over me,
and that is why I am quite content with my weaknesses,
and with insults, hardships, persecutions,
and the agonies I go through for Christ's sake.
For it is when I am weak that I am strong.*

Although we might find this difficult to accept in ourselves and for ourselves we still hear these words with deep understanding and admiration for Paul, don't we?

We have admiration for para-athletes who achieve amazing things, we honour people who have gone 'beyond themselves' for others, we glory in those we have known whose faith has held us up (Great day, yesterday to honour what Paul Bradley has taught us!). But there is some 'step' to be climbed over for us to accept this truth!

St Paul has boasted about the things he has achieved with God's help – its OK to look back! – but there are some things he is niggled by, still. He even speaks of this 'thorn in the flesh', which we have no idea of the meaning of, but he has finally come to realise that God has actually used this to show God's power working in Paul.

There is something real in recognising that if we resist letting God have control we will be less than we could be – and others may notice this, too. Try this when you look at the powerful people of the present and the past:

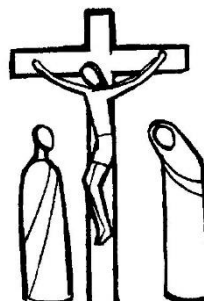
*"The person who has to be in control is weak
God's Power is displayed and perfected by weakness"*

The saints of the Church have often shown their holiness ('Like unto God') by realising that 'being broken God is making something new and great'. At the very least we can admire broken people for what they have achieved or endured – but it is a difficult reality to open ourselves to, isn't it?

God creates us very good – but it needs his help to make us as great as we could be if we have faith and accept the risk. Though uncomfortable, this message runs throughout the Scriptures and the Christian Faith story:

"For it is when I am weak that I am strong."

Really?



SATURDAY, JUNE 19, 2021

"In so many of life's situations, indeed, it may happen that we get discouraged... And we may allow ourselves to be paralyzed by doubt when we find we are working hard but the results are not achieved, and things seem never to change. The Gospel asks us to take a fresh look at ourselves and at reality; it asks us to have bigger eyes, that are able to see further, especially beyond appearances, in order to discover the presence of God who as humble love is always at work in the soil of our life and that of history. This is our confidence, this is what gives us the strength to go forward every day, patiently, sowing the good that will bear fruit."

Pope Francis

ANGELUS JUNE 13, 2021

PARISH NOTICES:

21st June COVID Changes:

the only real liturgical change is that wedding ceremonies can go beyond the 30 cap to match the present daily Mass and funeral limit based on social distancing. I presume there will be no further loosening until 19th July.

17th May Changes in Church service COVID Safety:

Mass: Not much change unless you miss bidding prayers and offertory processions – I think we will leave Mass as it is and see what the June day brings! (I hope the stewards can provide for us until then – their welcome ministry is great!

Funerals: The number at funerals increases to the Guide number set by the size of the individual church (If you hear people speaking of this please let them know that the rule is NOT: ‘you can have as many as you want!’) Practically, here, I will demand that people get permission from the family (who I will speak to before as usual) otherwise we could have too many people arriving to be safe!

Baptisms: Have legal limit now of 30 people – one Baptism at a time and not within Mass. Please invite families to contact me if they wish to arrange a baptism date. Now that we can have 6 people in the house we can also provide Baptism preparation for parents again.

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.)

Friday: You mentioned "New Start with Jesus" this morning. I can't remember a lot of detail about it, but know that I was very impressed with what was happening. One memory is of going, as part of a group, into Cardinal Allen School and mingling in small groups with the students, who were very welcoming and open in their approach to discussion. It really felt as though something great was beginning and I was so hopeful. Then, after Bishop Brewer's untimely death, I think it was mainly scuppered by finance (and the "new broom " approach). I really grieved about that. I seem to remember prayer cards being issued before any other action was taken and I feel that this was very important. The two articles from the Tablet are interesting and informative, and give me the same sense of anticipation which I had with "New Start". There is such a lot to pray for; how to get a truly representative group, who will proceed at the right pace, for one. Is this something that the housebound people could be involved in? There is such an untapped source there, and they could be such an important part of the foundation of "synodality" in our parish and diocese. Like an iceberg we will only see the part of the whole that goes on view at actual meetings, but there needs to be so much more unseen supporting mass.

Thursday: Funny you should mention mantillas - I found mine the other day, when turning a drawer out. I always carried it in my bag, just in case. I would offer to wear it as a demonstration, but couldn't cope with it along with a mask and hearing aids!

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Maureen Brown is in hospital	Please keep her in your prayers, thanks.
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>

As we seem to be moving out of lockdown, are there some things we have learned and must not forget?

How we missed people, our loved ones and their touch	
--	--