

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

15th July 2021

Thursday of the Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Sixty-eighth Thursday of Isolation

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*'Come to me, all you who labour
and are overburdened,
and I will give you rest.'*

Mass during the week:

Saturday – 15 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 – 16 th Sunday of Year	6.00pm - Sunday Vigil Mass St John's

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

Exodus 3:13-20

Moses, hearing the voice of God coming from the middle of the bush, said to him, 'I am to go, then, to the sons of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you." But if they ask me what his name is, what am I to tell them?' And God said to Moses, 'I Am who I Am. This' he added 'is what you must say to the sons of Israel: "I Am has sent me to you."' And God also said to Moses, 'You are to say to the sons of Israel: "The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is my name for all time; by this name I shall be invoked for all generations to come.

'Go and gather the elders of Israel together and tell them, "The Lord, the God of your fathers, has appeared to me, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; and he has said to me: I have visited you and seen all that the Egyptians are doing to you. And so I have resolved to bring you up out of Egypt where you are oppressed, into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land where milk and honey flow." They will listen to your words, and with the elders of Israel you are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, "The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has come to meet us. Give us leave, then, to make a three days' journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifice to the Lord our God." For myself, knowing that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless he is forced by a mighty hand, I shall show my power and strike Egypt with all the wonders I am going to work there. After this he will let you go.'

Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus said, 'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'

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

This passage from Exodus, within the story of Moses, is one of the best known for both Jews and Christians. It is a good picture story, but it is also a message which reminds us of some of our most basic needs as people of Faith. The story itself reminds us of how our own faith in God has developed, and where other people in society around us may be in their experience (or lack) of God's presence.

Firstly, we should not forget that Moses, though he is of the line of the people of God, and from a parental Levite background, has been brought up as an Egyptian and separated from whatever the descendants of Abraham (at this time) would believe about God. We are reminded that God's people throughout the Old Testament was continually developing in their understanding of their God and what he was calling them to. It was probably a huge shock for Moses to be addressed by God from a burning bush! He would, also, not have recognised this as the God of his family who was speaking. His response to God's call is to repeat it with incredulity: So....

*'I am to go, then, to the sons of Israel and say to them,
"The God of your fathers has sent me to you." !!!*

(I have added the exclamation marks as I think it would have had at least one!). His next words are very human and reveal his lack of knowledge: "....and who shall I say has sent me?"

After God simply names himself as “I am” God make Moses and his people a promise to respond to the difficulties they were experiencing:

*I have visited you and seen all that the Egyptians are doing to you.
And so I have resolved to bring you up out of Egypt where you are oppressed,
into the land where milk and honey flow.”*

These people’s understanding of God has developed as their relationship develops. It continues to develop as we move to the Exodus event, but it is no doubt helped by God recognising their need now.

Secondly, one of the things we have learned as Catholic Christians is that we cannot have faith in God if we are not in touch with the real God. We need to check that we are all speaking of the same real God. We only need to listen to people to realise that some have a very strange understanding of God. Our first concern is that we return to the Scriptures to double check that the God we speak of is, in fact, the real God. Like Moses we all have to go through a number of situations in our faith lives where we have ‘updated’ our understanding of God through sacred scripture (especially the relationship Jesus has with his Father) and our actual life experience of God. I have met people who wish that their faith was ‘as strong’ as it was when they made their first Holy Communion – if our faith has not developed since then we should worry, even though some of those development times may have been difficult (if our relationship with our own parents did not develop from that of our childhood it would be worrying, wouldn’t it?)

This community development of our relationship with God needs to lead us to open ourselves to deal with those who have no faith – people who have had no faith usually do have a philosophical picture of ‘god’ from somewhere but what is missing is their community and personal relationship development or experience with God – we cannot simply feed them theological facts but our actual experience. Something similar is true for people who have been brought up as Catholics but no longer walk with us. Some will need to know that the God or Church which they rejected is not the one we are part of now – they need to meet God and understand him in a different way. Sometimes we need to be careful not to simply speak to such people of our understanding of God, but to share with them the tools to begin to recognise his closeness and hear what he is offering us.

Finally, let us not forget that Jacob was the one who was declared by God as ‘the one who wrestled with God’. Keep an eye open to the very blunt way Moses interrogates God – it is OK and leads to Moses to knowing God very well, and fairly quickly! ‘Wrestling with God’ allows us to know God and develop our understanding of both how he walks with us and invites us to be part of his mission in the world – we will see this as the Exodus story opens up.

Ultimately the way we are Church and the effect we have on others has at its basis our understanding of who God is. Before we look at the question ‘What do we understand being Church’ we have to have an answer to the question: ‘Who do I see God as?’ As we saw in the Adam and Eve story, it is easy to create ‘god’ in our own image if we are not open to meeting God in scripture and our experience.

PS: I know I have passed this on before but it is part of this Moses story and our ministry:

*“In working with young people (or others),
do not try to call them back to where they were,
and do not try to call them to where you are,
as beautiful as that place may seem to you.
You must have the courage to go with them
to a place that neither you nor they have ever been before”.*

Vincent Donovan

THURSDAY, JULY 15, 2021

"I have felt your closeness and the support of your prayers. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!... Let us remember that, in the protocol of the final judgment – Matthew 25 – one of the things they will ask us will be about closeness to the sick. In these days of being hospitalized, I have experienced once again how important good health care is, accessible to all, as it is in Italy and in other countries... And let us pray for all the sick... Accompany them with prayer, especially for those in the most difficult conditions: may no one be left alone, may everyone receive the anointing of listening, closeness, tenderness and care. Let us ask this through the intercession of Mary, our Mother, Health of the Sick."

Pope Francis

ANGELUS JULY 11, 2021

PARISH NOTICES:

19th July Changes – If you noticed the Government's messages last night regarding 19th July you will be aware that we need to be careful in how we open up. Our bishops will be providing us with guidelines during the week but please keep in mind how we can encourage those who have been afraid of coming to parish events to participate more fully by our own practice. (This will not change before Next Monday.)

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.)

Wednesday Here we are again. It seems that the scriptures keep hammering it home - Abraham, Jacob/Israel and now Moses. To become disciple depends on two things: an encounter in some form with the living God; and secondly, the preparedness to respond: "Here I am Lord". This encounter is there for all to experience and it can come in many forms and at different times in our lives. We need to be attentive to these moments of grace. (Look at the successful and the unsuccessful invitations that Jesus is seen to make to people in the gospels). The call can appear to be a daunting prospect. But only after the "Here I am", and only ever after this commitment, comes the promise: "I will be with you". This promise is from a faithful God who never takes back his word. Why then do I find it so difficult to respond wholeheartedly and without reservation to the invitation of Jesus to "Come follow me"?

Tuesday I thought the last sentence from Pope Francis was so apposite to almost everything we experience in our so called enlightened world. The clarity of those few words is outstanding. The whole paragraph seems incredibly relevant to many of the prejudices and social attitudes as witnessed this week... flag waving, nationalism running wild and old rigid racism, yes Francis, although not talking directly about the English condition shows yet again that our core beliefs are perhaps the only way to assuage moments of hysteria. His insight, and that of his advisors, ought to be compulsive reading for our leading secular lights.

Sunday I wonder what today's spiritual equivalent of staff and sandals would be? Why did they have to be told to take them?

Thursday We know the story of Joseph from both sides, so to speak, but he only knew his side and Judah's words were the first time that he knew how his loss had affected his father, no wonder he broke down in tears.

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Alan Clews, who asks for your prayers	Alan is in a nursing home across the water.
Maureen Brown is poorly	Maureen is at home and progressing well (15.07.2021). Please keep her in your prayers, thanks.
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?

Peter Brownwood	<i>Peter has completed his treatment and has been given the "all clear". Thanks for your prayers and support</i>
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	
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