

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

17th July 2021

Saturday of the Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Sixty-eighth Saturday of Isolation

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*Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved, the favourite of my soul.*

Mass during the week:

Saturday – 16 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 – 17 th Sunday of Year	6.00pm - Sunday Vigil Mass St John's
Sunday	9.00am – Sunday Morning Mass at St Martin's 11.00am- Sunday Morning Mass at St John's

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

Exodus 12:37-42

The sons of Israel left Rameses for Succoth, about six hundred thousand on the march – all men – not counting their families. People of various sorts joined them in great numbers; there were flocks, too, and herds in immense droves. They baked cakes with the dough which they had brought from Egypt, unleavened because the dough was not leavened; they had been driven out of Egypt, with no time for dallying, and had not provided themselves with food for the journey. The time that the sons of Israel had spent in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And on the very day the four hundred and thirty years ended, all the array of the Lord left the land of Egypt. The night, when the Lord kept vigil to bring them out of the land of Egypt, must be kept as a vigil in honour of the Lord for all their generations.

Matthew 12:14-21

The Pharisees went out and began to plot against Jesus, discussing how to destroy him.

Jesus knew this and withdrew from the district. Many followed him and he cured them all, but warned them not to make him known. This was to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah:

*Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved, the favourite of my soul.
I will endow him with my spirit,
and he will proclaim the true faith to the nations.
He will not brawl or shout,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.
He will not break the crushed reed,
nor put out the smouldering wick
till he has led the truth to victory:
in his name the nations will put their hope.*

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

They're off! The text says that after 430 years in Egypt the people of Israel leave for freedom.

A huge number of people set off after they had communicated with each other and gathered for the 'Exodus' – there are hints here of the lines of modern refugees which we see moving out from mortal danger in their own country and being stopped by either occupying forces or the authorities in the country from whom they are asking for asylum. We may be cheering inside for the Israelites leaving slavery, but their journey will mean them being 'stateless', 'sans papiers', 'without passports', 'being seen as suspicious by other people' as they progress – never mind the desert situation! At this stage they are buoyed up by the knowledge that their God is with them – but danger to life can allow them to weaken in faith: and we will see that, of course.

Notice that yesterday's passage concentrated on the Lamb and its blood and we reflected on the development, through the Jewish history and practice, on the Christian Eucharist – we would use the liturgical term: 'the chalice'

Today there is mention of a simple 'dough' or 'cake' which was taken so quickly that there had not been time to put yeast in it. This was wrapped in their clothing to bake on the road. This will immediately make us reflect on our use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist – the 'bread for the road'. Once in the 'Land of Promise' the Israelites will use this unleavened bread in their memory of God's gift of freedom – and do at Passover to this day.

This whole picture of a people on pilgrimage is, of course a picture of ourselves as Church – a 'pilgrim people' who have no home, except in God. It also allows us to reflect on how the Eucharist fits into our pilgrimage of faith – Holy Communion is not an end in itself. The 'cake' in the Exodus (as well as the 'Manna' later on) are memorials of the God who was nourishing his people as he guided them on their pilgrimage (not that they always remembered this!) – the same is true of the Eucharist for us as God's people traveling the road to God himself. I think we can forget this aspect of the Eucharist. Jesus promised the disciples his body and blood to feed them – they needed to eat and drink him! Why? So that they could be nourished by him to be his presence in the world. "My flesh is real food; my blood is real drink".

When the Israelites began to complain of hunger they were desperately in need of food – but they were also reflecting the fact that they had lost sight of God's support. Sometimes we are shocked by the Israelites' anger with God – but we could ask ourselves what makes us hunger for a clearer experience of God's nourishing presence?

SATURDAY, JULY 17, 2021

"Let us recognize that there is no other way to come to the dawn than by passing through the night. And in the night of crisis, all of us need to remain united. Together, through honest dialogue and pure intentions, we can bring light where there is darkness. Let us entrust every effort and commitment to Christ, the Prince of Peace... Brothers and sisters, may the night of conflicts recede before a new dawn of hope."

Pope Francis

Saint Peter's Basilica - July 1, 2021

PARISH NOTICES:

Message from our Hospital Chaplains: [Coronavirus Update - Dr Jim Gardner, Medical Director - YouTube](#) and I would encourage you to watch it, because I was struck by some of the words he used: 'Rapid', 'Alarming' and 'strikingly rapid' are not words he bands around easily. *(This You Tube message is worth watching!)*

COVID response in Church from 19th July

You will appreciate that our image of opening churches to return to a previous practice cannot happen as we may have hoped – we need to keep in mind the fast increasing virus spread and also helping those who are afraid to feel safe in church. As the Prime Minister urged, so the bishops of England, together, have repeated, that we need to progress with caution.

Our own Bishop has said, particularly:

"Although most legal restrictions relating to the Covid pandemic are ending on Monday 19th July, a degree of caution is still needed where a large number of people gather in enclosed spaces, which of course, includes our churches.

Not only is the delta variant of the virus still spreading rapidly, it is also the case that those with suppressed immune systems still need a degree of additional protection against the virus.

Whilst in broader society, there may well be those who will welcome 19th July with a complete abandonment of anti-Covid measures, we owe it to others to be prudent in what we do in our churches at this time."

Our moving forward “with caution”!

From Monday we can open churches without the distancing we have become used to – though individuals may still choose to celebrate their ‘Sunday’ Mass on another day when there may be less people (Thanks to many who have chosen this response over the last year – if you are hesitant at meeting with others this may be a way forward, still).

Our bishop had advised that “*Face coverings should still be worn by all those coming to a church service*”. Please wear a mask when walking to Holy Communion.

We will still have to be part of the ‘Track and Trace’ system by either using the telephone QR codes (available in churches) or the sign-in details sheet. (This seems to be ending in August nationally?)

Please continue to sanitise your hands when entering and exiting church.

Congregational singing is a recognised way of easily spreading the virus and so we will not introduce this until we are more confident – and don’t need masks.

We do not need to clean benches unless there are two services on the same day – though surfaces such as door handles should be wiped down.

We have been asked not to reintroduce Holy Water, a physical sign of peace, communion under both kinds.

With these changes in place I propose to begin the Sunday Masses from next week, though we will need help to encourage people to feel safe and realise that they are not turning clock back to February 2020! Masks etc will be signs to us all.

“Welcomers” – because of the need to sign in, and because our stewards have done such an amazing job over the last year, we need some people to be ‘on duty’ before Mass to help people who have not been the church for a while. Could I ask our weekday Stewards to continue to welcome? We will need Steward / welcomers at the Sunday Masses to volunteer if we are to continue to be available for Mass. Volunteers please.

St Martin’s Sunday Mass: Because of the need to ventilate and sanitise for the 11am service I have offered to St Hilda’s that we will move our Mass to 9.00am to help them prepare for their service. (please pass this on)

St John’s Sunday Mass: will begin at 11.00am

Churches can be left open for private prayer and visits from 19th July with sanitiser available – thanks be to God!

Some local

‘opening up issues’:

Mass Stewards:

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Thanks to our Mass stewards who have done an amazing job over the last year keeping us safe and welcoming us to Mass. As I mention we will need welcomers for the coming weeks but if any of the stewards wish to step down please let me know. We do need people for Sunday Masses – if you could contact me over the week that would be good!

Ministers of Holy Communion, of the Word and of Welcomer.

I will put a list up on the notice board next week for people to sign up to take on these ministries on Sunday. If you were on the last list please do sign here – if you have questions please ask.

Those with movement issues

At Mass at the weekend especially, if you wish to sit through Mass and avoid worrying people kneeling behind you there are chairs at the front of St John’s which will be helpful. It will also help with Communion. Thank you.

Baptism / Funerals / Weddings:

The new COVID safety requirements from the 19th July declares that the number of people in the church is lifted – they do warn of numbers which are greater than the building can take.

Church guidance suggests baptisms are to involve only one child for the present.

- **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.)

Thursday The story of Moses and the Burning Bush included in this week's reading reminded me of a passage in one of Gerry Hughes' books. He reminded his readers of trying to see God in all things from the seemingly insignificant to the most profound. He includes the phrase "Every bush is burningif only we have eyes to see"

Wednesday **(Updated)** 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 the commitment is always followed by the reassuring words: "I will be with you". This promise is from a faithful God who never takes back his word. In Paul's words - "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me". 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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