

# St John the Evangelist, Poulton

18<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Sunday of the Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Sixty-ninth Sunday of Isolation

Telephone: 01253 893184

Sign on at: [saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com](mailto:saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com)

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

*So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves*

## Mass during the week:

Saturday – 16 <sup>th</sup> 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 <sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.universalis.com))

### **Last Sunday's Gospel**

*Jesus made a tour round the villages, teaching. Then he summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs giving them authority over the unclean spirits. And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. They were to wear sandals but, he added, 'Do not take a spare tunic.' And he said to them, 'If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district. And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away shake off the dust from under your feet as a sign to them.' So they set off to preach repentance; and they cast out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.*

**Mark 6:7-13**

### **This Sunday's Gospel**

*The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, 'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But people saw them going, and many could guess where; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length.*

**Mark 6:30-34**

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

If you can remember back as far as last Sunday the Gospel recounted that Jesus, after touring the local villages teaching and healing with his disciples, sent them off in twos to the villages to do the same. He told them to take nothing with them because they themselves were the tools they needed (Except one pair of shoes, as it might be a long way; and a staff, good for leaning on while you are teaching and listening!)

Whilst they were away (you will notice there is a gap in the references) we are told that Jesus hears of John the Baptist's execution! This confirms in Jesus that he will have to move on without his mentor and also that his training of his disciples has been started at the right time.

Today we have the message that this Jesus is not just some Rabbi concerned with airy-fairy ideas, but has his feet on the ground and understands human beings who are an integral part of his teaching and ministry.

The first line of today's Gospel is wonderful. After, obviously wondering about his disciples and awaiting their return (Sounds a bit like the Prodigal son, doesn't it?) he is ready to help them learn from their experience. This personal reflection on our experience is something we have probably all learned from our training – especially if it has been about people. We talk today about 'transferable skills' and it is useful for us to re-visit our own experience of learning and developing our abilities as we imagine the return of the disciples. And so the Gospel say, simply:

*“The apostles re-joined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught”*



Spend some time with this line. You can imagine a group of excited people all with a story to tell and all with a companion who could fill in the gaps! I can see Jesus doing just one thing: listening! (Ok he is probably smiling, too!) Sometimes we hear people speaking of Jesus as the person we can talk to in times of difficulty – but how wonderful it is for us to have a God who listens to us, first!

When they had calmed down, probably had a meal together, he insists that they continue to follow his example and find quiet:

*Then he said to them,  
‘You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves  
and rest for a while’*

“Come away” with him! They have mirrored Jesus in his active ministry, they have shared their experience and learning with each other and him, they are now led to take their ministry to the Father where they will find rest. (Notice how Pope Francis always goes to pray when he has been away to another land, or last week has come out of hospital)

As Jesus puts this way of reflecting on our ministry before us we could ponder on how I, personally, do this.

The end of lockdown, tomorrow, will not be the moment of freedom we had hoped it would be and we will need, as our bishops have warned, to ‘be cautious’. But tomorrow is a marker in this experience and a point to reflect on our response to this period as disciples of Jesus. It has undoubtedly been difficult, worrying and lonely for us – but those words were probably in the minds of the disciples we hear about in the Gospel today as they came back together!

This week, as we do, or don’t, progress with ‘unlocking’, perhaps we could use as a marker. Hear Jesus saying to you: “how have you got on as a disciple of mine?”

(I was thinking that, when Jesus meets us at the Heavenly Gates he will not greet us with the question: “Hello, Did you go to Mass every Sunday?” – but from our Gospel evidence, much more likely: “Great to see you. How did you enjoy being my disciple – what have you ‘done and taught’?”. He would want us to tell him our story and recall our experiences.)

Like the time this group of disciples were suddenly projected from their usual understanding of following Jesus, so the last eighteen months we have been thrown into leaving our previous discipleship practice and challenged to find new ways. This is a special time to reflect on what we have done – and what we have learned. Try this:

In terms of ‘my discipleship’: What have I found has been wonderful?

What have I discovered which I do not want to lose?  
Have I found areas of faith that I realise I need to develop?  
What have I found most difficult and will value more from now?  
How did this period change my prayer method or routine?

Jesus continually 'changes water into wine' – this has been (and will continue to be, it seems) a difficult time for us, but there will be wine in the experience which Jesus has produced when we didn't even notice there was water! The disciples in the Gospel today could not return to their previous selves after their experience with Jesus – It is more and more evident that we will not return the past and so, to look forward we will need to reflect honestly on our experience as disciples of Jesus and invite him to listen to our reflection and support us in where he is leading.

*Then he said to them,  
'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves  
and rest for a while'*

SUNDAY, JULY 18, 2021

**"Jesus prays for me: each one of us can carry this in their heart. We must not forget this. Even in the worst moments. We are already welcomed into Jesus' dialogue with the Father, in communion of the Holy Spirit. We were willed by Christ Jesus, and even in the hour of His passion, death and resurrection, everything was offered for us. And so, with prayer and with life, all that remains is only to have courage and hope, and, with this courage and hope, to deeply feel Jesus' prayer and to keep on going: so that our life may be one of giving glory to God in the knowledge that He prays for me to the Father, that Jesus prays for me."**

*Pope Francis*

GENERAL AUDIENCE JUNE 16, 2021

#### **PARISH NOTICES:**

**Message form 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> July with sanitiser available – thanks be to God!

### Some local

#### 'opening up issues':

##### **Mass Stewards:**

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##### **Mass Stewards:**

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 19<sup>th</sup> 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](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.)

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 burning ....if 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?

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

**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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