

# St John the Evangelist, Poulton

20<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Tuesday of the Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Sixty-ninth Tuesday of Isolation

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*Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother.'*

## 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))

**Post Lockdown Preamble:** This 'Virus times' regular scripture reflection on the daily Mass readings was intended to fit the 'Mass & social gap' during COVID and also help us to use the time to learn to read scripture thus to hear God's Word. Thanks to those who regularly contribute or thank me for the reflections. It was meant to stop abruptly when we all returned to full churches after Lockdown – as we can see from Moses' experience of God (below) God's insistence that we look forwards, not backwards, continues to trip us up! It also leads us forward to new life and hope (we may need to use scripture to remind us of God's hope?)

Could I ask you to ponder two things:

1. I was thinking of stopping the Virus Times at the end of this week. It does take time to compose, but it does great things for my spiritual development, and hopefully yours, too! What are your suggestions?
2. Could you send me a paragraph describing how helpful this scriptural reflection has been for you (and other issues related to the 'Virus Times') – I would like to put them together for other people to read to help them, also (this would be anonymous!) Even if you don't send your thoughts to me – please do the exercise for yourself.

### **Exodus 14:21-15:1**

*Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove back the sea with a strong easterly wind all night, and he made dry land of the sea. The waters parted and the sons of Israel went on dry ground right into the sea, walls of water to right and to left of them. The Egyptians gave chase: after them they went, right into the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.*

*In the morning watch, the Lord looked down on the army of the Egyptians from the pillar of fire and of cloud, and threw the army into confusion. He so clogged their chariot wheels that they could scarcely make headway. 'Let us flee from the Israelites,' the Egyptians cried. 'The Lord is fighting for them against the Egyptians!'*

*'Stretch out your hand over the sea,' the Lord said to Moses, 'that the waters may flow back on the Egyptians and their chariots and their horsemen.'*

*Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and, as day broke, the sea returned to its bed. The fleeing Egyptians marched right into it, and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the very middle of the sea. The returning waters overwhelmed the chariots and the horsemen of Pharaoh's whole army, which had followed the Israelites into the sea; not a single one of them was left. But the sons of Israel had marched through the sea on dry ground, walls of water to right and to left of them.*

*That day, the Lord rescued Israel from the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. Israel witnessed the great act that the Lord had performed against the Egyptians, and the people venerated the Lord; they put their faith in the Lord and in Moses, his servant.*

*It was then that Moses and the sons sang this song in honour of the Lord:*

### **Matthew 12:46-50**

*Jesus was speaking to the crowds when his mother and his brothers appeared; they were standing outside and were anxious to have a word with him. But to the man who told him this Jesus replied, 'Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?' And stretching out his hand towards his disciples he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother.'*

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

God asked Moses and his people if they wanted freedom from slavery. They definitely did! He did not tell them that this process would be easy! – we could do to remind them a number of times on the road!

Perhaps it would have been an expected understanding that the people would also have to trust God's methods? So the experience of 'escaping' from bondage was to travel towards a mass of water will have been an initial test of Faith for them!

However, as understandable as that might be, let's keep our eyes on Moses (Whose name means 'out of the water' – not 'into the water'). He has come from an, Israelite family of the tribe of Levi – but has been brought up in the Egyptian royal household. As an adult he met the God of his people, surprisingly, in a burning bush! In a relatively few years he has a particular relationship with this God who he trusts, very calmly, to fulfil his promises. Moses quietly (at least on the surface) leads his people to a river whilst their enemies follow with serious military power – with some faith!

Two things then happen: as he stretches out his arm the water stand up in walls to the right and left of them (what a picture is this?!) – then, when they have crossed and the Egyptians are on the sea bed Moses raises his arm and the water returns; drowning all the baddies!

Some people, reading this after thousands of years, regard this a cruel thing to do to people by God! But we weren't there and the frightened and injured people sang a 'song in honour of the Lord'!

At the breath of your anger the waters piled high;  
the moving waters stood up like a dam.  
The deeps turned solid in the midst of the sea.  
The enemy said: 'I will pursue and overtake them,  
I will divide my plunder, I shall have my will.  
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.'

*I will sing to the Lord, glorious his triumph!*

You blew with your breath, the sea closed over them.  
They went down like lead into the mighty waters.  
You stretched forth your hand, the earth engulfed them.

*I will sing to the Lord, glorious his triumph!*

You will lead your people and plant them on your mountain,  
the place, O Lord, where you have made your home,  
the sanctuary, Lord, which your hands have made.

Some people find it difficult to believe that God can be bothered to help us at all. Some of us believe that God CAN help us, but we do expect him to follow our plan! Sometimes what God does is so unexpected and huge that we either can't see it, or we like to down-grade it ('Well, it was tidal', 'it wasn't the 'Red Sea' but a lesser waterway full of Reeds – whatever it was, for those people it was a serious barrier, they got through and they are very grateful to God for allowing them their freedom!)

There is a chance we will regard this time of COVID as simply a horrible memory and blot it from our past as we move on (or backwards). I expect the next 40 years will be a bit like that for the Israelites – but instead somebody must have kept a diary where they recorded the good and bad experiences on the way. If they had lost the memory of this time they may not have noticed where God was working along the way. As we move forward, ourselves from here let's make sure we do not lose the memory which will remind us that God was with us all the time, and that we are in a new place full of richness.

TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2021

**“Let us pray to the Madonna, who cultivated silence, prayer and contemplation and who is always moved with tender compassion for us, her children.”**

*Pope Francis*

ANGELUS JULY 18, 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 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:**

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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