

# St John the Evangelist, Poulton

21<sup>st</sup> July 2021

Wednesday of the Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Sixty-ninth Wednesday of Isolation

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*Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop,  
some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.  
Listen, anyone who has ears!*

## 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 16:1-5,9-15**

*From Elim they set out, and the whole community of the sons of Israel reached the wilderness of Sin – between Elim and Sinai – on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left Egypt. And the whole community of the sons of Israel began to complain against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness and said to them, 'Why did we not die at the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we were able to sit down to pans of meat and could eat bread to our heart's content! As it is, you have brought us to this wilderness to starve this whole company to death!'*

*Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Now I will rain down bread for you from the heavens. Each day the people are to go out and gather the day's portion; I propose to test them in this way to see whether they will follow my law or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they have brought in, this will be twice as much as the daily gathering.'*

*Moses said to Aaron, 'To the whole community of the sons of Israel say this, "Present yourselves before the Lord, for he has heard your complaints." As Aaron was speaking to the whole community of the sons of Israel, they turned towards the wilderness, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the form of a cloud. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and said, 'I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel. Say this to them, "Between the two evenings you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have bread to your heart's content. Then you will learn that I, the Lord, am your God."' And so it came about: quails flew up in the evening, and they covered the camp; in the morning there was a coating of dew all round the camp. When the coating of dew lifted, there on the surface of the desert was a thing delicate, powdery, as fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When they saw this, the sons of Israel said to one another, 'What is that?' not knowing what it was. 'That' said Moses to them 'is the bread the Lord gives you to eat.'*

### **Matthew 13:1-9**

*Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, but such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people all stood on the beach, and he told them many things in parables.*

*He said, 'Imagine a sower going out to sow. As he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up straight away, because there was no depth of*

*earth; but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away. Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Listen, anyone who has ears!*

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

Before we start you may wish to [click here](#)? (It takes a moment to start)

Escape stories and films have always been popular – we know many and especially second world war ones. “The great escape” is one of the most famous and just the music from the film brings back the expectation, the worry and the reality of such events. But this film, like many others, is 90% the story of the planning and the preparation – when the freedom begins and the tension really tightens but the trudge which follows is seen as less pictorial. So in the great escape we find that only three men make it home – the reality of the everyday journey over mountains, through heat or cold, to safety – a story in itself – is only a small part in the film.

The story of Moses with the Israelites is a similarly exciting and tense story – at the beginning. They gather in Egypt, plan their escape, Moses insists God wants them to have a meal in preparation (Comforting), they move out of the city but towards the Red Sea (problem!), the Red Sea is crossed on dry land (Hurray!), but the baddies are following (Boo!), Moses raises his arm and the sea drowns the enemy (Hurray!), and they move on (Oh, ok).

We know this story and that the Israelites have now entered a process which will take 40 years to lead them home – to the Land of Promise.

But we are entering the trudge part of the story – the major part of the story – the ‘ordinary time’. Given the choice to escape, despite the danger, the Israelites grabbed it. They were uplifted by the energy which followed, but now they relax.

It is the start of the people moaning!

*‘Why did we not die at the Lord’s hand in the land of Egypt,  
when we were able to sit down to pans of meat  
and could eat bread to our heart’s content!*

*As it is, you have brought us to this wilderness to starve this whole company to death!’*

Notice that the people pray to God in their despair, God hears and answers, but because God has not answered in the way the people had wanted they complain: not to God, notice, but to Moses and Aaron! Feel for Moses and Aaron!

Here, again, despite moaning at Moses and Aaron, God hears and answers by giving them Quails for meat and Manna for bread.

It seems they have translated God’s ‘promise’ to them as ‘promises’ to them. They can see the events which answer their requests from God, but it is as if they are blind to the continual security God is providing – maybe God was going to provide this food anyway? (not that he minds us asking!).

The reality of God’s promise is that it is a continual and permanent promise. They were walking through the desert in a ‘tunnel’ of God’s promise which is there all the time – even when they don’t see it and might not, even, feel they need it at the moment.

This may well be a learning for us, too. Jesus asks us to pray to his Father for our needs – but he also invites us to ‘pray constantly’. Perhaps we need to be reminded to realise that, because of God’s love for us, we live in a continual invisible tunnel of God’s promise? Being aware of this promise will not mean we don’t need to pray for the things we need – but it may mean we have our answer before we pray; but we hadn’t noticed! (Our experience of walking along a road with no side path can make us

very insecure and afraid – but we are not often aware of feeling more secure on a nice path! It may help us, now and again, to comment on a safe side path?)

As the Irish may say:

*May the road rise up to meet you.  
May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your face;  
the rains fall soft upon your fields  
and until we meet again,  
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.*

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 2021

**“How many times this happens in the Church: we are busy, we run around, we think that everything depends on us and, in the end, we risk neglecting Jesus and we always make ourselves the centre... For it is not enough to “unplug” ourselves, we need to truly rest. And how do we do this? To do so, we must return to the heart of things: to stop, to remain in silence, to pray so as not to go from the frenzy of work to the frenzy of times of relaxation.”**

*Pope Francis*

ANGELUS JULY 18, 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:**

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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