

# St John the Evangelist, Poulton

4<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Tuesday of the 18<sup>th</sup> Week of the Year

St John Vianney

(*Twentieth Tuesday of Isolation*)

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Thanks to those who replied to my last scripture reflection with your own thoughts – if you want to be taken off the email list, or know anyone who may appreciate the contact, please let me know – or print it for a neighbour. (If you have only just started to receive these daily reflections it is because I have only just found your address, sorry) Thanks. Fr Peter.

**Note from Fr Peter:**

Thanks to those who write in their responses to our scripture reflections – it makes it all worth while! Thanks for giving me the chance to continue my vocation to preach the Gospel!  
**We will need more stewards to have more Masses.** Please let me know if you are willing.  
Thanks to those who have volunteered – but we need more to move forward

(Daily Scripture is available from [www.universalis.com](http://www.universalis.com))

**Jeremiah 30:1-2,12-15,18-22**

*The word addressed to Jeremiah by the Lord: the Lord, the God of Israel says this: Write all the words I have spoken to you in a book.*

*Yes, the Lord says this:*

*Your wound is incurable,  
your injury past healing.  
There is no one to care for your sore,  
no medicine to make you well again.  
All your lovers have forgotten you,  
they look for you no more.  
Yes, I have struck you as an enemy strikes,  
with harsh punishment  
so great is your guilt, so many your sins.  
Why bother to complain about your wound?  
Your pain is incurable.  
So great is your guilt, so many your sins,  
that I have done all this to you.*

*The Lord says this:*

*Now I will restore the tents of Jacob,  
and take pity on his dwellings:  
the city shall be rebuilt on its ruins,  
the citadel restored on its site.  
From them will come thanksgiving  
and shouts of joy.  
I will make them increase, and not diminish them,  
make them honoured, and not disdained.  
Their sons shall be as once they were,  
their community fixed firm in my presence,  
and I will punish all their oppressors.  
Their prince will be one of their own,  
their ruler come from their own people.  
I will let him come freely into my presence  
and he can come close to me;  
who else, indeed, would risk his life  
by coming close to me? – it is the Lord who speaks.  
And you shall be my people and I will be your God.*

**Matthew 15:1-2,10-14**

*Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem came to Jesus and said, 'Why do your disciples break away from the tradition of the elders? They do not wash their hands when they eat food.' He called the people to him and said, 'Listen, and understand. What goes into the mouth does not make a man unclean; it is what comes out of the mouth that makes him unclean.'*

*Then the disciples came to him and said, 'Do you know that the Pharisees were shocked when they heard what you said?' He replied, 'Any plant my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them alone. They are blind men leading blind men; and if one blind man leads another, both will fall into a pit.'*

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

A quick note on St John Vianney – as he is the patron Saint of Parish Priests! He grew up in France after the revolution and was impressed by the work of the priests who survived the persecution and came out of hiding to minister to the people and celebrate Mass where possible. He showed interest in becoming a priest but was not good at Latin and was not accepted by the Diocese of Lyon as a student (he was called up to be a soldier – but that's a long and sad story) but eventually a monsignor in the diocese convinced the bishop to let him train John to be a priest. John Mary Vianney was eventually ordained priest in 1815 and sent to a derelict, mostly destroyed (Buildings and parish) parish north of Lyon called Ars. The official Church in France was neglected after the effects of the revolution but Fr John build up the congregation (and the building to some degree) by working closely with the farming community and forming a school. He is well known for having people from all over the world coming for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Please pray for Parish Clergy.

In some ways Jeremiah's message today is similar to the one God had given to the people of this time through the other prophets we have seen: accept your sin – be forgiven. However, as we have seen, Jeremiah does seem to have a wonderful way of translating God's words.

The world today seems to be filled with some people who are good at pointing to those who have failed, of have done bad things, but will not entertain any forgiveness – and those who are open to give people a second chance without admitting the evil they have actually done and its effects on others. We see this often when the media interviews the relations of a person who has been offended by heinous crime. You will remember particular historical examples. How do we deal with this situation ourselves?

In Jeremiah today God does not duck the reality of Israel's sin:

*"Your wound is incurable,  
your injury past healing.  
There is no one to care for your sore,  
no medicine to make you well again.  
All your lovers have forgotten you,  
they look for you no more."*

God does not ignore evil, paint over sin, ignore wrongdoing, make excuses for badness.

However, God has an answer for the future after sin and evil. He never says: 'But its alright'. He never pretends it has never happened. He manages to look through the evil actions to the future possibilities. This ability to 'look an evil person in the eye and love them' despite the past is central to God's way – even though it is very difficult for humans to achieve this. So

after declaring the actions of God's people 'incurable', 'past healing' he can say to the same people:

*"Now I will restore the tents of Jacob,  
and take pity on his dwellings:  
the city shall be rebuilt on its ruins,  
the citadel restored on its site.  
From them will come thanksgiving  
and shouts of joy."*

Who in the world can hold both these outcomes together at the same time? Well, obviously God can and does!!! How can anyone of us offer both these views of an evil person? Well, without God they obviously can't!

This ability to give new life to damaged people is only even imaginable if they know God can do this – and if we have felt the edge of his forgiveness ourselves. This ability in human beings is imagined if we have God's example. But if the world does not know God, imagining forgiveness for some people will become impossible and will be endangered on earth! (If people do not believe in God what should we be afraid of?)

The only way we can have these insights into life, as God does, is to share his mind. Again, and again, God offers us an invitation:

*"you shall be my people and I will be your God"*

Of course, treating people with the mind of God and speaking with God's mind is the prophet's work – and we are baptised as prophets by Jesus. But, as with all prophets, we will upset some people if we speak out loud. This lovely line in Matthew's Gospel from the disciples to Jesus underlines this:

*"Then the disciples came to him and said to Jesus,  
'Do you know that the Pharisees were shocked when they heard what you said?'"*

Let us pray for Faith for us in our world

TUESDAY AUGUST 4, 2020

*"Jesus was well aware of what He was about to do, but He wanted to change their attitude: not to say, "send them away," "let them fend for themselves", "let them find something to eat", but rather, "what does Providence offer us to share?" These are two opposite ways of behaving. And Jesus wants to bring them to the second way of behaving because the first proposal is that of the practical person, but is not generous: "send them away so they can go and find, let them fend for themselves." Jesus thinks another way. Jesus wants to use this situation to educate His friends, both then and now, about God's logic. And what is God's logic that we see here? The logic of taking responsibility for others. The logic of not washing one's hands, the logic of not looking the other way. No. The logic of taking responsibility for others. That "let them fend for themselves" should not enter into the Christian vocabulary."*

*Pope Francis*

ANGELUS, AUGUST 2, 2020

## **PARISH NOTICES:**

- **Working towards opening church for Mass**

You will have heard that the government has given permission for places of worship to open – but with strict guidance and under the supervision of the Bishop and the Parish Priest. The two most important messages are that vulnerable people must stay safe at home, and that distancing will affect numbers and how we celebrate the Eucharist. This is not easy – and we need everyone’s cooperation.

Before we look at a way forward for our parish could I mention that we need to have two trained, and not vulnerable, stewards to be present at each celebration. This our starting point to move forward. We have to start with the same practices we have had at the “private prayer” opening demands which you may be familiar with. If you feel you could help us to extend our availability for Mass please come this week to see what being a steward entails.

I have met with our existing six stewards who volunteered to run the ‘private prayer’ openings and we agreed that we have to move forwards slowly so that we stay healthy and friendly. One of the difficulties will be that our church can only hold 30 people from different households in the congregation within the safety guidelines – though, of course, people from the same household can sit together. This will mean that if we have the allotted number of congregation the stewards will have to, gently, turn others away – this is counter cultural for us, but is for health reasons so please do not take this personally!

Many vulnerable people, those living with people who are vulnerable and families have already suggested that they feel this is a little soon for them to feel safe with a larger mixed group in church – and this is understandable. (It is to give our understanding to such people that I am happy to take our time in opening) We are not beginning with Sunday Masses to ensure people do not mistake ‘opening for Mass’ as ‘back to normal’!

As we already have the stewards who are willing to be present we will celebrate Mass this week on Tuesday and Thursday morning at 9.30am at St John’s.

For the sake of those who work we would like to move towards Mass the following week on Wednesday evening at 7pm – but this will depend on having volunteers to steward.

*Please remember: The bishops are keen to remind us that “the obligation to celebrate Mass on Sunday remains suspended”. (It is easy for us to have become accustomed to distancing in the outside world – but fall into what life was in inside church – be careful!)*

Finally please remember that the Bishops can suspend the Sunday Obligation as this is a ‘law of the Church’ – they cannot suspend “keep Holy the Sabbath Day’ as this is God’s law. Please ensure you continue to celebrate the Resurrection as you have been doing: by praying the scriptures, streaming etc

(‘Virus Times Scripture Reflections will continue to help us gather around the Word of God)

- **St Martin & Hilda’s open for private prayer**

Our chapel will be open for private prayer on Wednesdays from **9.30am to 12.30pm**.

Great thanks to Joan Swan for organising this under the safeguarding guidelines of the Church of England and the responsibility of the Vicar of St Chad’s. St Chad’s are celebration the Eucharist in St Hilda’s on Wednesday at 11am – you are invited to drop in.

If you wish to offer any help please contact Joan on 07887 880497

*We could celebrate the Eucharist on Wednesdays if there was a call and some stewards.*

- **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: [https://www.wyre.gov.uk/forms/form/257/en/coronavirus\\_isolation\\_support\\_form](https://www.wyre.gov.uk/forms/form/257/en/coronavirus_isolation_support_form)

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 of anonymous responses from these Virus Times Reflections from our parishioners: Thanks to contributors.)

**Saturday:** *This pandemic, and your response to it, has given us a rare opportunity to easily access the Word of God - and to reflect on your words too.*

*Who expected the year of the Word would look like this? Be careful what you wish for!*

*We have missed sharing the Eucharist, but our souls have been nourished! Thank you.*

**Thursday:** *I liked your Mary and Martha story yesterday and I decided that I am probably a Martha eg at Christmas my sister and I will be making the meal together but she will then disappear and return in her Christmas outfit ready to greet the guests and pop the Champagne. I meantime remain sweating over the roast potatoes and Brussel Sprouts!! (she does bring me glass ) but I know someone has to be the hostess!! I will try and stop being a martyr!!*

*I also appreciate the stories you tell about your family and your Mum and Dad (they sounded lovely) as I then think of my parents RIP. It's great you can remember your first day at school I have a school photo but that's it. My two daughters attended St John's primary school and I know they have lovely memories of their time there.*

**Thursday:** *Thanks Fr. Peter for the Virus Times. You have linked the Old and New Testament well to give us a clearer understanding of them. Your thoughts for meditating have been inspirational. Today's readings takes me back to my pottery time when my clay objects never turned out the way I hoped!! Thanks also to the kind folk who provided the appropriate music and songs for us over the last few weeks. Much appreciated.*

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Bernard Hargreaves RIP	Funeral Service at St Martin's on Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> August & Crematorium
Various Older People we worry about	Whilst we are enjoying the promise of loosening lockdown we still have concerns for relations and friends who have signs of Covid-19 and who have been taken to Hospital. Please pray for these people – and for those we don't know as well.
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.
Maureen O'Connell & Family( <i>Not Covid-19</i> )	Mrs Donnelly's Mum
Paul Sharrock ( <i>Not Covid-19</i> ) (and family: Kathryn, Mary & Rachael)	<i>Is showing continued, but slow, progress. He is eating a proper diet and having a lot of physiotherapy – which he's not enjoying! Fr Peter</i>
Parents home schooling AND home job-ing	Thank God for our parents – but, after so long, finding it difficult to fulfil their work responsibilities and 'entertain' their children under lockdown.
Our Teachers	Who are resting!!!