

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

13th September 2020

Sunday of the Twenty-fourth Week of the Year
(Twenty-sixth Sunday of Isolation)

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com
Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk



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:

Please notice the Parish Quiz advert under 'Parish Notices'

Thanks to Elaine for her series of quotes from Julian of Norwich (*See Parish Comments below*)

Please encourage those who are afraid of coming to large gatherings that our present Masses have small numbers of attenders and this is a good place to begin a return to Mass:

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday at 9.30am at St John's

Wednesday at 9.30am at Ss Martin & Hilda's Chapel

Saturday at 6.00pm at St John's

We still celebrate the Resurrection on Sundays – **Which day is your 'Sunday Eucharist'?**

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

Ecclesiasticus 27:33-28:9

*Resentment and anger, these are foul things,
and both are found with the sinner.
He who exacts vengeance will experience the vengeance of the Lord,
who keeps strict account of sin.
Forgive your neighbour the hurt he does you,
and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven.
If a man nurses anger against another,
can he then demand compassion from the Lord?
Showing no pity for a man like himself,
can he then plead for his own sins?
Mere creature of flesh, he cherishes resentment;
who will forgive him his sins?
Remember the last things, and stop hating,
remember dissolution and death, and live by the commandments.
Remember the commandments, and do not bear your neighbour ill-will;
remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook the offence.*

Matthew 18:21-35

Peter went up to Jesus and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.'

'And so the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; but he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt. At this, the servant threw himself down at his master's feet. "Give me time" he said "and I will pay the whole sum." And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt. Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him. "Pay what you owe me" he said. His fellow servant fell at his feet and implored him, saying, "Give me time and I will pay you." But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt. His fellow servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him. Then the master sent for him. "You wicked servant," he said "I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?" And in his anger the master handed him over

to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.'

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

I discovered this week that there are languages which do not have a 'comparative' and 'superlative' sentence structure – they just repeat the word twice or three times. So with 'Holy, Holy, Holy' – or 'Old', 'Old, Old', and 'Old, Old, Old'! This is a simple structure, but, in every language there are words or understandings which develop in use, but we may not notice in our own language use. I mention this here, but we will see a particular usage in today's Gospel passage.

So, to begin with, notice that today's Gospel follows immediately on from last weeks. Jesus is speaking to the disciples (Not the Pharisees, or 'the crowd') and the questions are being asked by Peter. This is an 'In Service Training session' and is directed at the needs and questions of a group who have come a long way in following and hearing Jesus – they were not newcomers. The issue is 'forgiveness' and 'mercy'. This is not the first time Jesus has spoken about this and we, like the disciples here, will remember that in the 'sermon on the mount' Jesus' fifth Beatitude was:

*"Happy the merciful
They shall have mercy shown them"*

(Here we are in chapter 18 of St Matthew and, it seems, Peter had been keeping this clarification question since chapter 5!)

So Peter asks:

*'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me?
As often as seven times?'*

Seven is a special number, with special significance – it is a 'top' number, a 'perfect' number in the culture of the day. There is a general scale. If someone insults you and you decide 'Oh forget it' we might call it a number one. Or we might decide 'we will mention it to the other person to make up, but leave it until we next meet them'. But a seven demands that we forgive them 'immediately', 'now', 'straight away'.

Maybe Peter is asking whether he needed to forgive his brother 'less than immediately' sometimes? But the answer he gets from Jesus is strong:

'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.'

But why should we do this? Jesus speaks of people in the Kingdom and tells a parable of what life is like in the Kingdom. The story tells of two stewards – one is owed a huge amount of money (An unbelievable debt in modern money) and the other the equivalent of a few week's wages. We know the story, but read it again (There are some of these money details we may have missed the meaning of). This is a story of God's forgiveness of huge amounts - and the ease at which we can, even after being forgiven by God, miss the fact that we can suffocate others about us (Isn't that what its like to be insulted and misunderstood?)

Hearing the scriptures at Mass is our weekly INSET with Jesus – like the disciples listening to Jesus during his ministry. If we ask the question: ‘why are we expected to forgive people who are difficult to forgive?’ the answer is: “God forgave us first”. That’s it.

But there is more to God’s forgiveness than even the likes of St Peter can offer at the moment. ‘should I forgive more than ‘immediately?’

‘Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.

This Gospel passage changes from being a ‘lesson for disciples on how to forgive’ and becomes a ‘reflection on God’s response to people’s sinfulness’. How can God forgive more quickly than ‘immediately’? How well does God know us – and still stand with us? How far can God’s love for us reach? Does God know what we are about to do badly and forgive us even then? And does he want me to learn how to forgive as he does?

If we have never experienced God’s forgiveness our learning will be difficult, and perhaps, simply philosophical. But for the answer to these questions we need to go beyond simply this passage in the Gospels (or the wider scriptures in which we have seen God’s forgiveness in recent week day readings). We need to keep our eyes open to how Jesus deals with the people who meet him – a simple message is that he always forgives people, cures people, before they promise not to sin again!!! This is ‘beyond seven’, is it not?

How many other ways of acting should we revisit in our selves so that we act in ways that God has done to us in the past?

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 13, 2020

“Let us all rejoice that our loving Creator sustains our humble efforts to care for the earth, which is also God’s home where his Word “became flesh and lived among us” (Jn 1:14) and which is constantly being renewed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.”

Pope Francis

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CARE OF CREATION SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

PARISH NOTICES:

Parish Quiz for CAFOD – *Please pass this on to other parishioners and encourage them*

Hi - Because we can't all gather together in person at the moment, we have decided it would be a great idea to have a Parish online quiz. This will take place on Sunday 13th September at 12 noon. We will be raising funds for Cafod - if you would like to play, please visit

<http://cafod.org.uk/celebration>

and search "online quiz". You will then see our fundraising page where it would be fantastic if you could make a donation to take part.

If you would like to take part, please also email me on deborahhelenwood@gmail.com. We will be hosting the quiz on Zoom. I will send you the Zoom link and details explaining how you access everything. For the best quiz experience, it would be great if you are able to access Zoom on one device and have another online device, e.g. mobile phone, to play along with on Kahoot. If not, please don't worry. If you can access Zoom, bring a pen and paper along and you can play along this way too.

If you have any questions at all, please just give me a call on 07883599511 or drop me an email.

Best wishes

Debbie Sumner

- **When you come to Mass:**

Despite getting used to physical distancing over the past three months returning to a familiar situation, like church, can make us forget we are still threatened by a virus that could kill vulnerable people. We have been asked to ensure Government and Church rules which might seem intrusive but they are designed to remind us to be careful and, above all, to keep distances. Please help us with this.

- Government guidelines demand that all the congregation (except those with exemption certificates) wear mouth and nose masks in church
 - Please maintain a 2m distance as you approach and enter church and be guided by the stewards.
 - Please note there is a 'one way' system – entering church by the left hand door.
 - Please sanitise your hands as you enter church
 - You will be invited to leave your name and contact detail for 'Track & Tracing' in case of need.
 - If you wish to wear a face mask you may do this – but please bring your own.
 - To minimise movement in church Stewards will direct you to fill the benches from the front. You will probably not be able to go in your 'usual' bench but that will give you a new perspective!
 - Please remove your mask just before approaching for Holy Communion and then replace afterwards.
 - You will receive instructions for coming forward for Holy Communion. But please respect distancing (don't bunch), move for Communion using the one-way system, please stretch out your arms fully as you request Holy Communion, you will not be invited to speak "Amen" before receiving Holy Communion. These will need to be kept in mind at first and we do need to remember they, though not the best liturgy, are about distancing and staying well.
 - Holy Communion must be received only on the hand. (No gloves, please)
 - Please sanitise your hands as you leave church by the other door than the one you entered.
 - As you leave church please move away from the door and remember to distance yourselves if you speak to other people.
- **10.09.2020 News from Victoria Hospital** : Yesterday Dr Jim Gardner provided the staff of the trust with his latest weekly update. He noted that there was only one patient in the hospital who had had a positive test result in the last 14 days, and that this was good news. However, the trust had reported 2 further deaths over the last week, and these were **not** due to statistical adjustments. Locally, the rate of infection is 17 per 100,000, which is above the national average, and represents a significant increase on the previous week's rate of 9 per 100,000. Mirroring the national picture, younger people in the population represent a major part of the increase in infections. Dr Gardner's concern is that in other countries where a similar pattern has been observed (e.g. France and Germany) this is followed by an increase in hospitalisations in 3-4 weeks' time. Please continue to keep all healthcare staff and volunteers in your prayers. *Fr Andrew Dawson, Catholic Chaplain*

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

Thursday: *I have never before heard the word gentle in association with St Paul - must give that some thought.*

A mother, years ago was heard to grumble that her child had been at school for (?) weeks and had still not been taught the Hail Mary!!!!

Elaine Brownwood has been reading this prayerful work and she has offered to share some revelations with us:

“These extracts are taken from “Enfolded in Love” Daily Readings with Julian of Norwich, Published by Darton, Longman & Todd (1980). Translation by Members of the Julian Shrine, Norwich. Original thought to have been written in the late 14th century.”

DAY 2 - GOD’S LOVE OR AS JULIAN OFTEN REFERS TO IT “GOD’S GOODNESS” SURROUNDS US

Enfolded in God’s love

“As the body is clad in clothes, and the flesh in the skin, and the bones in the flesh, and the heart in the whole, so are we clothed body and soul in the goodness of God and enfolded in it.”

Love of God shows itself in love of others and vice versa

“As I see it, God is all that is good, has made all that is made, and loves all he has made. So, whoever loves his fellow human beings for God’s sake, loves all that is made.”

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

John O'Hagan who has died	
Alan	Could we pray for Judith Reeves' dad She says: <i>I wanted to drop you a short email to let you know that my Dad has been diagnosed with liver cancer. I wanted to thank everyone for their prayers and ask for their continued prayers as we move forwards. Dad was taken into hospital on Monday and is quite weak. The hope is that if he gets stronger we will be able to bring him home. He is yet to start the appropriate treatment and we will know more in the coming days.</i>
Jacinta's Nana Lyn	Poorly and asks for your prayers
A Lady in Intensive Care	The Parish WhatsApp Group ask for your prayers
The People of Beirut	
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(Not Covid-19)	Mrs Donnelly's Mum
Paul Sharrock (Not Covid-19) (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>
Our Teachers	