

# St John the Evangelist, Poulton

7<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Thursday after the Epiphany of the Lord  
Forty-second Thursday of Isolation

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Second Year of Publication – Third Lockdown



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.

## Notes from Fr Peter:

**Lockdown III:** In England Religious Worship can continue under COVID safe rules – though we are not allowed to meet outside in groups of more than two. If you have symptoms please do not come to church.

### Mass during the week:

Saturday	6.00pm	Vigil Mass at St John's
Tuesday	9.30am	St John's
<i>Epiphany of the Lord</i>		
Wednesday	9.30am	St Martin's
	7.00pm	St John's
Thursday	9.30am	St John's
Friday	9.30am	St John's
	8.15am	For school, parents and children
Saturday	6.00pm	Vigil Mass at St John's

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

**1 John 3:22-4:6**

Whatever we ask God,  
we shall receive,  
because we keep his commandments  
and live the kind of life that he wants.  
His commandments are these:  
that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ  
and that we love one another  
as he told us to.  
Whoever keeps his commandments  
lives in God and God lives in him.  
We know that he lives in us  
by the Spirit that he has given us.  
It is not every spirit, my dear people, that you can trust;  
test them, to see if they come from God,  
there are many false prophets, now, in the world.  
You can tell the spirits that come from God by this:  
every spirit which acknowledges that Jesus the Christ has come in the flesh  
is from God;  
but any spirit which will not say this of Jesus  
is not from God,  
but is the spirit of Antichrist,  
whose coming you were warned about.  
Well, now he is here, in the world.  
Children,  
you have already overcome these false prophets,  
because you are from God and you have in you  
one who is greater than anyone in this world;  
as for them, they are of the world,  
and so they speak the language of the world  
and the world listens to them.  
But we are children of God,  
and those who know God listen to us;  
those who are not of God refuse to listen to us.  
This is how we can tell  
the spirit of truth from the spirit of falsehood.

**Matthew 4:12-17,23-25**

*Hearing that John had been arrested, Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled:*

*'Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali!  
Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan,  
Galilee of the nations!  
The people that lived in darkness has seen a great light;  
on those who dwell in the land and shadow of death  
a light has dawned.'*

*From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'*

*He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people. His fame spread throughout Syria, and those who were suffering from diseases and painful complaints of one kind or another, the possessed, epileptics, the paralysed, were all brought to him, and he cured them. Large crowds followed him, coming from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judaea and Transjordania.*

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

Happy Christmas –

The Epiphany does not conclude the feast of Christmas, but it leads us forward. Scripturally it also leads Jesus forwards as we watch with Christmas eyes and ears. The liturgical season does not end until after the Baptism of Jesus: and traditionally the 'seasoning' is not completed until the feast of the Presentation on 2<sup>nd</sup> February.

What is happening at this time is that we re-adjust our eyes to a world where God shares our humanity – not just as a baby, but as an adult, too. The ancient tradition in the Church is to concentrate on the scriptural 'signs' which show Jesus' place in our lives. You will easily see them as the Gospels open up before us and we name them. But the four ancient 'Gospel Christmas Signs' are The birth of Jesus, the Epiphany, the baptism of the Lord and the Wedding at Cana – you will see these highlighted in coming days – but other signs will be noticed, too.

Today we are encouraged to notice that the Incarnation is not just a doctrine of the Church. It has a real impact on the development of Jesus and, because of this, it has an impact on how we become human beings through Jesus' response to sharing our reality.

Today's Gospel is, in some ways, a very simple reflection on our own experience.

Jesus stayed at home for many years after he returned to Nazareth with his family. We know nothing about it but, like our own experience, it was important for his growth and questioning.

He eventually leaves home to join John the Baptist's community and obviously became part of John's leadership team. His training in speaking, understanding and leading must have been important for him – as our training at various times has been welcome and memorable.

There is usually something which happens to trigger our move forward – it might be getting a job, having responsibility placed on us, or simply realising that 'no-one else is going to do it, so I must'. It is a make-or-break moment or process. In the Gospel today we hear:

*"John had been arrested"*

We are not sure how this event affected John's community. But Jesus has to make a choice as to what to do now. According to the Gospel passage:

*"Jesus went back to Galilee,  
and leaving Nazareth  
he went and settled in Capernaum"*

Did he return to Nazareth like some people return home when things go wrong? ('I'm going home to mother'). Or did he call in at home to let them know what he had decided to do next? We will never

know, but here is God in human skin making decisions like we all have had to do. 'It is alright to be human' we may be being told?

It is not unimaginable that Jesus knew the area around Capernaum because he had preached there under John's tutoring? He may, also, have met people from this area when he was with John along the River Jordan?

Whatever, this is the point where Jesus, Son of God, both God and Man, stepped forward to accept his calling – and the loss of John, as painful as this will have been, was part of the trigger. There are times when we can be paralysed by sudden change.

Jesus does not simply continue what he was doing before, either. He accepts his mission as his own.

*"From that moment  
Jesus began his preaching with the message,  
'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'"*

He even has his own 'Vision Statement' for those who would ask what he was about.

From this point the 'Signs' begin to appear! John preached. But Jesus' preaching was not just words – he is the 'Word made Flesh', his words are action. And this is why the actions are signs of who Jesus is (not 'proofs' but natural responses) – and what he is inviting us to be part of!

The Christmas Gospels remind us that this feast is not about a baby, but about a person. They also remind us that Jesus' humanity teaches us how to be human, as well as how to reflect God in our lives.

Keep hunting for the 'Scriptural Signs' of Christmas.

THURSDAY JANUARY 7, 2021

*"Those who do not give thanks and those who do; those who take everything as if it is owed them, and those who welcome everything as a gift, as grace. The Catechism says: "every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving". The prayer of thanksgiving always begins here: to recognize that grace precedes us. We were thought of before we learned how to think; we were loved before we learned how to love; we were desired before our hearts conceived a desire. If we view life like this, then "thank you" becomes the driving force of our day. And how often we even forget to say "thank you"."*

Pope Francis

GENERAL AUDIENCE DECEMBER 30, 2020

#### **PARISH NOTICES:**

##### **COVID 19 Security - When you come to Mass:**

***Now that we have been allowed to move from private prayer to being able to celebrate Mass together please remember to do so safely. 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 by being careful.***

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ There is a basket at the back of church for your offertory donations – thank you.
- ✓ There are weekly bulletins at the back of church with other information.
- ✓ Please do greet other people outside church – but remember to distance yourself and do not meet in groups that are obviously more than six.

Thanks to our small, but keen, band of stewards, without whom we could not open our church. Please speak to them if you would like to help with this.

- **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.)

- Wednesday:** *I think that gifts say something about both the giver and the recipient. In a way it shows how the giver values the recipient, and it also shows the recipient how the giver sees him, and whether much thought has gone into the gift. When the Magi found the baby in lowly surroundings, they could easily have held back the expensive gifts as being "unsuitable" - but they knew that the gifts were eminently suitable. The East does seem to value wisdom more than property, where we in the West seem to reverse that view. It is good that both aspects of Christmas have been joined, but if I could only have one, I would plump for the Eastern view.*
- Wednesday:** *Two things came to me in my reflection. The first is one that you highlight - "they went back by different way" and you invite us to ask how has my encounter with Jesus changed me. We might make it more challenging - "If I haven't changed, why not and what must I do? God has put his living Spirit in me to give me the power to be changed, so what is preventing me from going forward in a different way? Perhaps 'us grownups' need to kneel at the feet of the infant, adore Mary's child and invite him to change me.*

*The second point is a small point but "The star halted over the place where the child was ... and going into the house they saw the child." It would appear perhaps that Mary and Joseph had by this time settled in Bethlehem (hence the massacre of the two-year old's) and it was from there that they had to flee to Egypt. How can one read scripture year after year and not see things? Is this why the child is not in the manger?*

**Friday:** *Thankfully ..... "God's love for us does not, and never will, depend upon us. It is completely free love."  
Pope Francis*

**People being prayed for by our parish groups:**

Veronica McNeil has died –	please remember her, and her husband in your prayers Veronica's funeral will be at St John's on Friday 8 <sup>th</sup> January at 11am. (Invitation of the family only, please)
Peter Brownwood	Who is worried about his health – but progressing well.
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.
Paul Sharrock ( <i>Not Covid-19</i> ) (and family: Kathryn, Mary & Rachael)	<i>Paul has had another operation, yesterday, to drain fluid from his brain. It seems to have gone well but we would like his to be out of the general hospital. They are certainly not giving up on him! Thank you staff – Thank you, God. Thanks for your prayers so far - Please continue to pray for them. Fr Peter</i>

**'Thank You, God'** - Do we have any news to thank God for - as well as other people we are praying for?

<b>Our School Staff</b>	<i>Who have broken up for a holiday – and other teachers.</i>
<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>