

# St John the Evangelist, Poulton

8<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Friday after the Epiphany of the Lord

Forty-second Friday 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:

**'Sorry' 1** – I was about, honest, but for early Mass today!!! Worse than that nobody has contacted me to remind me! This may be a sign that it is too cold or too COVID to offer this at the moment. If I don't hear from anyone I will leave this Mass off the agenda for school until things change.

**'Sorry' 2** – I forgot to send you the Melbourne reflection for Epiphany – Hope I remember to attach it today!!! Dementia setting in?

**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 4:7-10**

*My dear people,  
let us love one another  
since love comes from God  
and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.  
Anyone who fails to love can never have known God,  
because God is love.  
God's love for us was revealed  
when God sent into the world his only Son  
so that we could have life through him;  
this is the love I mean:  
not our love for God,  
but God's love for us when he sent his Son  
to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away.*

**Mark 6:34-44**

*As Jesus stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length. By now it was getting very late, and his disciples came up to him and said, 'This is a lonely place and it is getting very late. So send them away, and they can go to the farms and villages round about, to buy themselves something to eat.' He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.' They answered, 'Are we to go and spend two hundred denarii on bread for them to eat?' 'How many loaves have you?' he asked. 'Go and see.' And when they had found out they said, 'Five, and two fish.' Then he ordered them to get all the people together in groups on the green grass, and they sat down on the ground in squares of hundreds and fifties. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing; then he broke the loaves and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the people. He also shared out the two fish among them all. They all ate as much as they wanted. They collected twelve basketfuls of scraps of bread and pieces of fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.*

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

Happy Christmas –

*“Keep hunting for the ‘Scriptural Signs’ of Christmas”,* ended yesterday’s reflection. Not surprisingly we discover two areas of scriptural signs today.

Like ourselves, the early Christians began to meet each Sunday, the day of the Resurrection, to celebrate the Eucharist together. They did this before a regular annual calendar of feasts was formed in the Churches of the world. We can imagine, then, that when Christians began to celebrate a period we now call ‘Christmas’, and they highlighted the signs of who Jesus is during the Christmas scriptural scheme, they would have been celebrating the ‘Breaking of Bread’. They will have begun to re-visit the meaning of the celebration of the Eucharist in the light of the Christmas event.

And so we can, also, look at our celebration of the Eucharist in the light of the feast of ‘God made flesh’.

Today we have the scripture passage which reminds us of the meaning of the Eucharist – the Feeding of the Five Thousand.

We also have today’s first reading to remind us that, in the Incarnation, a new constitution is promised to God’s people – the promise of a new covenant between God and his people. An agreement based on love – but what sort of love?:

*“God’s love for us was revealed  
when God sent into the world his only Son  
so that we could have life through him;  
this is the love I mean:  
not our love for God,  
but God’s love for us when he sent his Son  
to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away.”*

The ‘Feeding of the Five Thousand’ then shows us what this new Covenant will look like:

God has concern for and will feed his people.  
Jesus shares his ministry with those he feeds: *“Give them something to eat yourselves”*  
Jesus trains his people in his (and their) humanity: *“Go and see”*  
Jesus teaches his people to bless his Father: *“raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing”*  
God’s generosity is huge: *“They all ate as much as they wanted”*

God seems to be offering all the ‘heavy lifting’!!?

But, of course, it does not take much of a jump for his disciples to recognise Jesus linking the last Supper, his death and resurrection and the Christian Eucharistic liturgy with Jesus’ actions in feeding his people:

*Then Jesus **took** the five loaves and the two fish,  
raised his eyes to heaven and said the **blessing**;  
then he **broke** the loaves and  
handed them to his disciples to **distribute** among the people*

We will notice this as the foundation of the shape of the Eucharist and many different Gospel passages involving Jesus include this: Jesus “took, blessed, broke and gave”. We see it at the Last Supper, the Road to Emmaus, in the passion of Jesus, in the words of St Paul reminding us of his experience of the ‘Breaking of Bread’.

But ponder this. We see it also in the Old Testament passages. Can we also see it in the infancy narratives we have celebrated recently? God **takes** his Word; **blesses** this reality he is going to gift to his people; God **breaks** the Divinity of his Word to make it the Incarnated Jesus; and **gives** this gift to his creation beginning in Bethlehem.

When we celebrate the Eucharist the priest 'takes, blesses, breaks and gives' – but we are continuing something God the Father began. It is not surprising that his son did the same at the Last Supper and on the Cross!

A passage to remind us:

**Philippians 2:6-11**

*"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

FRIDAY JANUARY 8, 2021

*"Dear brother, dear sister, God became flesh to tell us, to tell you that He loves us like that, in our frailty, in your frailty; right there, where we are most ashamed, where you are most ashamed. This is bold, God's decision is bold: He took on flesh precisely where very often we are ashamed; He enters into our shame, to become our brother, to share the path of life."*

Pope Francis

ANGELUS JANUARY 3, 2021

#### **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:

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 arrived back at his unit from the general hospital. It is much easier to communicate with the special unit and they appreciate how important contact with family is for people in such situations. Sadly Paul has not had even video contact with his wife since a face to face meeting on Christmas day. Things are looking up, now – and he is has not got COVID – 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>