

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

12th January 2021

Tuesday of First Week of Ordinary Time

Forty-third Tuesday of Isolation

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com

Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk

Second Year of Publication – Third Lockdown

Letter to the Hebrews

*“God has never said to any angel:
You are my Son,
today I have become your father”*

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
Wednesday	9.30am	St Martin's
Thursday	9.30am	St John's
Friday	9.30am	St John's
Saturday	6.00pm	Vigil Mass at St John's

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

Monday

Hebrews 1:1-6

At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son, the Son that he has appointed to inherit everything and through whom he made everything there is. He is the radiant light of God's glory and the perfect copy of his nature, sustaining the universe by his powerful command; and now that he has destroyed the defilement of sin, he has gone to take his place in heaven at the right hand of divine Majesty. So he is now as far above the angels as the title which he has inherited is higher than their own name.

God has never said to any angel: You are my Son, today I have become your father; or: I will be a father to him and he a son to me. Again, when he brings the First-Born into the world, he says: Let all the angels of God worship him.

Tuesday

Hebrews 2:5-12

God did not appoint angels to be rulers of the world to come, and that world is what we are talking about. Somewhere there is a passage that shows us this. It runs: What is man that you should spare a thought for him, the son of man that you should care for him? For a short while you made him lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and splendour. You have put him in command of everything. Well then, if he has put him in command of everything, he has left nothing which is not under his command. At present, it is true, we are not able to see that everything has been put under his command, but we do see in Jesus one who was for a short while made lower than the angels and is now crowned with glory and splendour because he submitted to death; by God's grace he had to experience death for all mankind.

As it was his purpose to bring a great many of his sons into glory, it was appropriate that God, for whom everything exists and through whom everything exists, should make perfect, through suffering, the leader who would take them to their salvation. For the one who sanctifies, and the ones who are sanctified, are of the same stock; that is why he openly calls them brothers in the text: I shall announce your name to my brothers, praise you in full assembly.

Mark 1:21-28

Jesus and his disciples went as far as Capernaum, and as soon as the sabbath came he went to the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority.

In their synagogue just then there was a man possessed by an unclean spirit and it shouted, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.' But Jesus said sharply, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking each other what it all meant. 'Here is a teaching that is new' they said 'and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him.' And his reputation rapidly spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.

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

So here we are, in what the Church now calls: "Ordinary Time". This sounds a bit drab, doesn't it, but, like having beans on toast after the rich food of Christmas, the relief of ordinary time helps us put the richness of what we have learned over the Advent & Christmas scriptures into every day practice.

Hitting 'Ordinary Time' running means we have to keep in mind what we have learned. Packing the white, bright, Christmas liturgical gear away and replacing with green, and shutting the red Lectionary away to replace it with a blue thick one can give us the idea we are starting a new, unconnected world of 'ordinary'. But the scriptures of our 'Ordinary Time' make the connection.

This is helped by the first week in this 'Year 1' is from the 'letter to the Hebrews'.

A bit of background: We really don't know who wrote this letter – though there is not doubt it is from the early Christian community and fits in with the theology of the other early writings. The book fits the background of the other writings directed at the convert Jewish Christian communities. As it does not hint at the destruction of the Temple it was probably written before 70AD. There are hints that it may have been directed at the convert Jewish Christians in Rome enduring the persecution of Nero – there is an atmosphere of encouragement for those who may have been regretting their move to Jesus or may be doubting his power. Keep this in mind as we hear what is being said to us.

The whole 'Incarnation' issue, central to the Christmas message, now seems to have the Christmas 'glitter' brushed off it as we are confronted with the 'Ordinary Time' implications for us.

The first message is how the High Priesthood of Jesus is much more powerful than any other we could meet – trust him. But the second message is how the incarnation of Jesus now makes human-kind central to God's plan.

In the time we live people around us seem easily distracted by the unusual – since COVID we have seen a sudden widespread burst of conspiracy theories and accusations without any need for evidence. But have you noticed, over the past years, how much interest has developed in Angels?

Perhaps we are so easily distracted from the ordinary that we miss what might be more obvious?

As we enter 'ordinary time' the Word of God reminds us to notice how important we are as disciples of Jesus. The letter to the Hebrews reminds us that all creation has its place, but don't forget:

*"God has never said to any angel:
You are my Son, today I have become your father; or:
I will be a father to him and he a son to me."*

Angels have their place, but don't be so mesmerised by their 'otherness' that you miss your own special place in God's plan. The author of the letter to the Hebrews goes on, making the connection between Jesus and his people:

*"As it was his purpose to bring a great many of his sons into glory,
it was appropriate that God,
for whom everything exists and through whom everything exists,
should make perfect, through suffering,
the leader who would take them to their salvation"*

So, we are led to ask, how do we make use of this ministry, and in 'ordinary time'? The answer is, as usually, in studying the Jesus of the Gospels.

There are two important things we could learn from those who first heard Jesus in today's Gospel:

Firstly they said: *"he taught them with authority"*. We have all experienced teachers who cared about us and spoke well, but didn't sound like they believed what they were teaching. Jesus sounded like he was the author of what he taught – he wasn't getting it from a text book – it came from deep inside him and from his own experience. If we are to be taken seriously as his disciples we need to learn to speak God's truth from deep within our experience and belief.

Secondly, the passage regarding the freeing of the man from the evil spirit is overseen by the crowd. Their response was:

*'Here is a teaching that is new' they said
'and with authority behind it'*

These people wanted to do this good act for those they knew and regarded what they saw as Jesus teaching them. Jesus, of course, was teaching them much more than simply healing – but those witnesses obviously recognised Jesus was sharing something with them and not simply being a 'traveling show'!

As we open the Gospels, and get used to this 'Ordinary Time' we could ask ourselves:

What does Jesus want to teach me, and how to do it with authority?

Am I open to learn how to be a Disciple of Jesus? (What the Disciples, too)

MONDAY JANUARY 11, 2021

"Worshiping the Lord is not easy; it does not just happen. It requires a certain spiritual maturity and is the fruit of an at times lengthy interior journey. Worshiping God is not something we do spontaneously... In our day, it is particularly necessary for us, both as individuals and as communities, to devote more time to worship. We need to learn ever better how to contemplate the Lord. We have somewhat lost the meaning of the prayer of adoration, so we must take it up again, both in our communities and in our own spiritual life."

Pope Francis

HOMILY JANUARY 6, 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. 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 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?

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. Kathryn was allowed to visit Paul yesterday – he was tired but good – though they had to sit 2 metres apart (Have you measured that?) 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?

Our School Staff	<i>Who have broken up for a holiday – and other teachers.</i>
Clare and Pete Cobb's glorious music	<i>they have sung us through Covid; it's been a joy – and still is!</i>
For all our Faith-filled Parishioners with whom we share our weekday Masses.	<i>It's so supportive to be in the presence of others.</i>
To scientists working on a COVID help	<i>Well done for breakthroughs</i>