

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

28th April 2021

Fourth Wednesday of Easter

Fifty-seventh Wednesday of Isolation

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com

Parish Website: www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk



*For what I have spoken does not come
from myself;
no, what I was to say,
what I had to speak,
was commanded by the Father
who sent me,*

Mass during the week:

Saturday –	6.00pm	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	St John's

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

Acts 12:24-13:5

The word of God continued to spread and to gain followers. Barnabas and Saul completed their task and came back from Jerusalem, bringing John Mark with them.

In the church at Antioch the following were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. One day while they were offering worship to the Lord and keeping a fast, the Holy Spirit said, 'I want Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which I have called them.' So it was that after fasting and prayer they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

So these two, sent on their mission by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and from there sailed to Cyprus. They landed at Salamis and proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; John acted as their assistant.

John 12:44-50

Jesus declared publicly:

*'Whoever believes in me
believes not in me*

*but in the one who sent me,
and whoever sees me,
sees the one who sent me.*

*I, the light, have come into the world,
so that whoever believes in me
need not stay in the dark any more.*

*If anyone hears my words and does not keep them faithfully,
it is not I who shall condemn him,
since I have come not to condemn the world,
but to save the world.*

*He who rejects me and refuses my words has his judge already:
the word itself that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day.*

*For what I have spoken does not come from myself;
no, what I was to say,
what I had to speak,
was commanded by the Father who sent me,
and I know that his commands mean eternal life.
And therefore what the Father has told me
is what I speak.'*

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

The Great Adventure continues – and at some pace!

Here we have the out-going Church meeting up at Antioch with renewed vigour and excitement. This is, of course, two thousand years ago and in a very different culture but we do need to feed on their faith and methods for our own times. There are two messages I would like us to concentrate on as these marks will become greater and important throughout the history of the Church – though it is true they would not always take the lead they do in these foundational times!

'The universal nature of the community'

The original Church was founded between two places: the city of Jerusalem and the area of Galilee around the Lake. Neither of these places could be described as 'isolated' as Jerusalem was a world capital and anyone moving from the North to the South of the world (and returning) had to pass through Capernaum and its tax points. There would be a world mix of people in both these places – but the Jewish culture was strong and more than a little inward looking culturally.

It is not surprising that, after the killing of Stephen and its repercussions on the Jesus people, many Jesus followers moved out. This was not only to live a spiritual community life, but also to begin to work out the mission they had been given by Jesus.

Right from the start St Luke tells us strongly that the community contained a mixture of people, from different lands, speaking different languages and not all originally Jewish. In today's passage we are carefully told there were some who spoke Aramaic, Hebrew, Latin, Greek and North African and that's just a start! Evidently one of the messages St Luke wanted us to be quite clear about was that this new 'Christianity' was to be universal, open to all people, representative of all cultures, interested in sharing faith with others – and we see this in action, especially as Paul meets people in the Greek parts of the Mediterranean.

This might all be nice and obvious to us who call ourselves the 'Catholic Church'. But we have seen times in the Church when we have not actually acted like this, haven't we? For a Church who feel we are open to others we have used the word 'excommunicate' very easily! This is a good place to ponder what our 'openness' means in practice when considering other Christian groups, other world Faiths and people who, perhaps, don't believe as I might think I do? What can we learn from others? And do we see others as Jesus does?

'The evidence of the Holy Spirit'

This has been mentioned in the Acts readings over this week a number of times. The presence of the Holy Spirit to the early community is becoming more and more important as we move through this work. Today there is a wonderfully clear and honest line which may lead us to ask more questions than it answers:

*"the Holy Spirit said,
'I want Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which I have called them.'*

Well, that's helpful, isn't it? Exactly how does this work? And how can we use it?

Personally, I was introduced to the Holy Spirit as the part of God which you were encouraged to pray to the day before your exams which you knew you hadn't done enough work for! The good news was that I was never happy with a 'magic' God who didn't expect you to be involved with! But the bad news was that I don't remember being given any help in how to work with the Spirit of God.

The beginning of the way forward for us is, as usual, in the Word of God where we find that these early post resurrection disciples seem to have worked on this 'sharing' and can speak with clear honesty. 'The Holy Spirit said....'

The bottom line seems to be that they are not tied up with lacking trust in the reality that God might have a way forward which is not held back by human lack of faith, imagination and 'let go'. The line between failing to let go and let God' and 'pray hard and God will magically decide' seems to lead the disciples to have the same relationship with God the people of the Old Testament did when things were going well! The God who creates his people and then wishes to walk alongside them is the same God who wants to share his very power with them. The process needs us to discern what the very power of God might be offering to share with us – but if we won't accept this idea, or simply invite him to 'do something' whilst we go and do something else; 'Pray for peace but build more nuclear missiles'?

Faith is not easy is it? Working with God may make us fear we may make a mistake? Or we can opt for the obviously possible and miss out on improbable possibility?

After two thousand years of Christianity we seem to have a long way to go to be able to say the words these early Christians spoke. As we read this Word of God this year perhaps we can look for the signs of practical help which supported the community in working with the Spirit? Today we hear that 'fasting and prayer' were part of the practice to discernment. Keep an eye on this development.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28, 2021

"Do I pray, certain that I am in the Church and that I pray with the Church? Or do I pray a bit according to my ideas and then make my ideas become prayer?... Without faith everything collapses; and without prayer faith is extinguished. Faith and prayer together. There is no other alternative."

*Pope Francis
2021*

GENERAL AUDIENCE APRIL 14,

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.)

Sunday: So much to ponder! We refer to family as “our own flesh and blood” and so they are. They have our genes, we have given them life, we have shared our lives with them and we hope our values. You may also remember the TV programme entitled “You are what you eat”.

St Augustine commenting on John Ch. 6 writes: ***“If you receive the Eucharist well, you are what you eat. Since you are the Body of Christ and his members, it is your mystery which you receive. As you come to communion, you hear the words ‘The Body of Christ’ and you answer ‘Amen’. Be, therefore, members of Christ that your ‘Amen’ may be true. Be what you see. Receive what you already are.”***

For the first thousand years of the Church, the baptised were called the True Body and the consecrated bread and wine was called the Mystical Body. How did this become flipped? As you write: The ‘off top of the head’ answer goes nowhere near the whole answer.

Saturday: **Understanding the signs: Food for thought:**

I had a friend who used to do a lot of serious thinking. In speaking of him I would say that “he chews things over.” We also speak of someone “munching” an apple meaning that the person eats steadily and often audibly. When Jesus is responding to the question: “How can this fellow give us his flesh to eat?” John, writing in Greek, uses a very physical word which is best translated as “munch” or “chew”. And so, in this accurate translation, Jesus’ words are: “The one who chews (munches) my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life”.

When we share in the Eucharist and “eat this bread and drink this cup” we are indicating our readiness to ponder deeply (“chew on”) the meaning and significance of this act of communion which makes us one, not only with the one we claim as Lord, but also one with each other, his true body called to his mission: “My food, he said, is to do the will of the one who sent me”.

Is our food to be anything less?

Saturday:

Three disjointed thoughts

“Even with his eyes wide open he could see nothing at all” was the sentence which stood out to me - I so often feel like that.

The picture of St Paul having fallen from a horse had come into my mind too. Do you ever wish you could have read the book before you saw the pictures?

Did your mother ever send you for a loaf of bread and you bit the corners off on the way home, or was that just my generation?

(Just “Yes” to all three – Fr Peter)

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Len Rawcliffe RIP	Len’s Requiem Mass will be at St John’s on 14 th May.
Maroulla RIP	Maroulla’s family thanks you for your prayer. The Requiem Mass will be at St Martin’s Chapel on Wednesday 5 th May at 2.30pm (admittance by invitation of the family)
Peter Brownwood	Who is worried about his health – but progressing 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.

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

Our School Staff	
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>