

Sunday November 1st, The Feast of All Saints

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the guidance we receive to overcome these strange times, and continuing to pray for all our needs at this time.

I am sure you have all heard the news that from Thursday we are to have another month of lockdown, during which we are not allowed to hold public services. It is very disappointing, but we have gotten through this once, and we will get through it again. In this new lockdown, however funeral services are permitted in Church for up to thirty people, so that is an improvement on the last complete lockdown. I will arrange for the Church to be open each day for an hour of private prayer, **between 12noon and 1pm**, but this will only be possible with stewards, so I would ask you to sign up throughout the week for this duty (and many thanks to those who have already signed up). We will have the last public Mass of the month on **Wednesday evening at 7pm**. Let us just pray that this circuit breaker or whatever they want to call it will do what it is supposed to do and we will regather to celebrate Advent and Christmas as they should be celebrated. Mass will be recorded each week, and that includes Remembrance Sunday next week, and on the third Sunday of November I will read out the list of names of all the people who have died since last year, as we usually do. Obviously this year we are unable to invite every family, but we have alerted them to the Mass and that it will be on the YouTube from Saturday 14th. Please watch out for friends, neighbours, those lost, lonely, and alone in this next month, in whatever safe way you can. And let's continue to be together even though for the rest of November we have to be apart.

*God of heaven and earth,
in these times of isolation,
apart from loved ones,
distant from friends,
away from neighbours,
thank you that there is nothing in all of creation,
not even coronavirus,
that is able to separate us from your love.
And may your love that never fails
continue to be shared
through the kindness of strangers
looking out for each other,
for neighbours near and far
all recognising our shared vulnerability,*

*each of us grateful for every breath,
and willing everyone to know the gift
of a full and healthy life.
Keep us all in your care.
Amen.*

And you might like to check out this article on Archbishop Nicholls response

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/13529/catholic-bishops-challenge-covid-church-closures->

But back to today as we celebrate the wonderful Feast of All Saints.

In a weeks' time we will celebrate remembrance Sunday, and in many countries there is a tomb of the unknown soldier, a place where people who have lost loved ones in a war but are unable to visit a cemetery for whatever reason, can come and grieve. Our national tomb is in Westminster Abbey. The Unknown Soldier is not just one person, but is representative of all people who have been killed in all wars. And while the individual soldier remains 'unknown', each individual soldier was, of course, known. Known to many, his friends, his family, his loved ones, and known unto God.

Most of the saints we celebrate today will be unknown to the majority of us. But each individual Saint will almost certainly be known or have been known by someone. Because today we are celebrating our ancestors, our family, our friends, people from our own Parish, our diocese, our country, people from all parts of the world, people born hundred, thousands of years ago. And unlike the great Saints, who have individual named feasts throughout the year, or are our special patrons, or the founder of some religious order, we don't know all their names, or their life histories. The saints we celebrate today may not have been martyred. They may not have done incredible, faithful actions. They will all have been sons and daughters. They may have been mothers and fathers. They could be Kings and Lords, or poor and lowly. They might have done deeds of derring do, or they might have led simple, ordinary lives. They may not have preached, and may have led incredibly solitary lives, seen or noticed by no-one. And as I say, in that throng of Saints there will surely be many of our own dear ones who have gone before us – parents perhaps, or children who died young, or people who knelt beside us in this very church, or next-door neighbours. The great truth, which was proclaimed boldly at the Second Vatican Council, is that "The Lord Jesus... preached holiness of life... to each and every one of his disciples no matter what their condition of life" (Lumen Gentium para. 40). This is only another way of saying that we have all been called to be saints. The call to holiness, to sainthood, is open to everyone. It is what we were created for.

One thing is certain; the Saints we celebrate today – all of them, millions of them throughout history, all followed the teaching of Christ, most beautifully outlined in the Gospel of St. Matthew, in the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are Christ's instructions for Sainthood, his manifesto for entrance into the Kingdom. But it should be noticed that they are far from specific, and they certainly don't refer to martyrdoms or great acts or eloquent preaching. Instead they speak of a way of life, a plan for living your life with your eyes fixed firmly on God and his service and the service of others. They speak of sadness, and being able to live through times of trial until future joy. They speak of the creation of the world where all people seek to live in peace and harmony, with one another and with God. And they speak of a great and glorious reward in heaven.

This reward, this glorious future is outlined in the second reading from the first letter of St. John. Speaking of God's great love for us, John tells us that the plan is that we too shall one day be Saints in the heavenly Kingdom. We shall be like him. We shall be like them. That promise, the reward, sainthood is for the future. As today we celebrate those who have achieved the fulfilment of that promise, let us ensure the fulfilment of that promise for ourselves in the future, by living out today's Gospel, here and now.

Dear God,

thank you for the example of the Saints.

I desire to join in their company, worshipping you forever in Heaven.

Please help me follow their footsteps, and yours, Jesus Christ.

Please help me to conform myself to Your image,

seeking Your will in all things, as the Saints did.

Please help me to devote myself, and all that I do,

to Your glory, and to the service of my brothers and sisters.

Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

And what else could we sing today other than. 'For All The Saints Who From The Labours Rest'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OaBgaMcOvM>

I don't know if Garden Centres are considered 'essential shops' to stay open in lockdown so I've been and bought a plant. Somewhat random, but there you go. Enjoy the rest of the day!

This morning's Mass was videoed (with a couple of verses of a hymn for the first time in a couple of months) and is available for the week on the YouTube at <https://youtu.be/63XLnffSIDY>

and texts for Mass each day can be found at <http://www.universalis.com/>

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost (or kind of bunched up). Any suggestions for ways to keep our faith and spirits up at this time are most welcome!

And remember, St. Bernadette's is not closed, though the building is, most of the time. We're just doing things differently for a while, until we are allowed to gather together once more, more stronger, more faithful, more loving, more creative, and more grateful for the amazing community that is St. Bernadette's.

With love and faith in Jesus.

Fr. P.