

Tuesday December 1st, Tuesday in the First Week of Advent

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.

Welcome to December! White rabbits and all that. And now we definitely know there are twenty-five days to Christmas! Time to open the first door on the Advent Calendar. I'm just back from Mass in school where Year 3 did a lovely Mass on the theme of Advent.

In Isaiah 11:1-10 the prophet foretells that one will come from God who will have the spirit of wisdom, insight, counsel, power, knowledge, and fear of the Lord, a man of integrity. He will bring great peace. That day, the root of Jesse, Jesus Christ, shall stand as a signal to the peoples. *'It will be sought out by nations and its home will be glorious.'*

And in the Gospel, Luke 10:21-24, the prophecy is seen to have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ who filled with the Spirit joyfully prays to his Father that people are finally recognising who he is. *'Happy are the eyes that see what you see... many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see and never saw it, to hear what you hear, and never heard it.'* So let us happily say a thank you prayer to God:

Dear Lord, I praise You and I love being in Your presence.

Thank you for allowing me to have You in my life.

Thank You for the sacrifice you made for me on the cross.

Thank You for helping my heart to rest in Your presence.

In this crazy world, it is here that I find truth, grace, and mercy.

My heart is overwhelmingly grateful.

As it overflows with gratitude, may You present opportunities for me to serve.

Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

And today, December 1st, we remember St. Edmund Campion. Edmund Campion was born in 1540, the son of a bookseller in Paternoster row, just behind St Paul's Cathedral in London. He grew up amid the religious upheavals of the sixteenth century following the break between Henry VIII and Rome. Campion was able academically and went to St John's College, Oxford, at the age of 15 and was awarded his degree in 1564 and became a Fellow of the University. In 1566, he was chosen to make a formal speech of welcome to the new Queen, Elizabeth I, when she visited Oxford. Much impressed with Campion, Elizabeth ensured he had friends and patrons at Court, and he was ordained

a deacon in the Anglican Church. Increasingly Campion came to believe that the Protestant church was not the true continuation of the Christian faith and that only in the Catholic Church would he find a home.

With the excommunication of Elizabeth I by Pope Pius V in 1570, everything became much more difficult for Catholics and people like Campion who were unsure of their religious allegiance. Campion became a Catholic and went to the new seminary for English Catholics founded at Douai in France. He walked, barefoot, to Rome to become a Jesuit in April 1573. He was ordained priest in 1578.

Campion was persuaded to join the new mission to England. On 16th June 1580, Fr Robert Persons SJ landed at Dover, the Superior of the new mission. On 24th June, Campion followed, disguised as a jewel merchant. Campion moved between the houses of Catholics who practised their religion in secret. At one such house, Lyford Grange in Oxfordshire, he was betrayed and arrested on 17th July 1581 and imprisoned and tortured in the Tower of London. Condemned for treason, he was dragged on a hurdle to Tyburn where he was martyred. He was hanged and then, drawn and quartered on December 1st 1581. He was canonized in 1970 Pope Paul VI along with 39 others, making up the forty martyrs of England and Wales.

*St. Edmund Campion,
martyr for the Roman Primacy,
obtain for us, but especially for the Church's bishops and priests,
such obedient loyalty to the Vicar of Christ that like you,
they will not be afraid to proclaim the truth
and like you, they will be willing to shed their blood for Jesus Christ.
Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

The English Lay Jesuit and Poet Thomas Pounce wrote a poem, while he himself was in the Tower of London for treason, on the martyrdom of Thomas Campion, and his friends, fellow priests Ralph Sherwin and Alexander Brian. It concludes:

*The heavens did clear, the sun like gold did shine,
the clouds were dry, the fearful river ran,
nature and virtue wept their watered eyen,
religion joyed to see so mild a man,
men, angels, saints, and all that saw him die,
forgot their grief, his joys appeared so nigh.
Rejoice, be glad, triumph, sing hymns of joy,
Campion, Sherwin, Brian, live in bliss,*

*they sue, they seek the ease of our annoy,
they pray, they speak, and all effectual is,
not like to men on earth as heretofore,
but like to saints in heaven, and that is more.*

More than ever we should get to know the stories of the fathers of our faith in the United Kingdom. We have a wealth of shoulders of giants to stand on, and their intercession at this time is most gratefully received. Let's pray the official Marian Prayer for England:

O blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our most gentle Queen and Mother, look down in mercy upon England thy 'Dowry' and upon us all who greatly hope and trust in thee. By thee it was that Jesus our Saviour and our hope was given unto the world; and He has given thee to us that we might hope still more. Plead for us thy children, whom thou didst receive and accept at the foot of the Cross, O sorrowful Mother. Intercede for our separated brethren, that with us in the one true fold they may be united to the supreme Shepherd, the Vicar of thy Son. Pray for us all, dear Mother, that by faith fruitful in good works we may all deserve to see and praise God, together with thee, in our heavenly home.

Amen.

How about we finish off with 'I Vow To Thee My Country',

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mFO_sjmYFk

Don't forget that you can now book in for Christmas masses, though please keep 12noon on Christmas Eve for Family Bubbles with children, with the other masses being 5pm, 8pm on Christmas Eve and 10am on Christmas Day. I'm quite prepared to say another Mass if necessary, but let's fill up these masses first. Also, I'm still requesting family board games and selection boxes for families in our Schools, thanking you in anticipation.

Have a great day – at least there's no dentist! Hope you manage some relaxation time. The attached photo is of my niece Antonia and their cat, Kevin, 'relaxing'. It must be an Australian thing...

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. 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.