

Thursday July 2nd, Thursday in Week Thirteen in Ordinary Time, Year II

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the advice from the government and the medics about what we should be doing in this time of crisis.

And I trust everyone continues to pray for all our needs at this time.

As we continue the Book of Amos, Amos 7:10-17, we have a short biographical account of the work of Amos. The priests of the pagan gods at Bethel in the northern kingdom tried to get him out and back to Judah, because they did not like what he was saying. He did not depend on the king, as the other prophets did; he believed that the Lord had called him, so he was not afraid to make his prophecy, which told the Israelites that they would be sent into exile.

Today's Gospel, Matthew 9:1-8, is the wonderful story of the healing of the paralytic man, who is so determined to see Jesus that his friends let him down through the roof of the house Jesus is preaching in. The first thing Jesus says is *'My child, your sins are forgiven.'* Jesus immediately responds to the paralytic's faith with the forgiveness of his sins. This may not have been uppermost in the mind of the paralytic, but it is a direct consequence of his great faith that Jesus can help him. After the theological debate with the scribes, the physical healing is almost an afterthought, certainly considered less important by Jesus than the forgiveness of sins and the great demonstration of faith which the man has shown.

Today, perhaps especially in this time of pandemic, illness and sinfulness are still both great stumbling blocks to many people's faith. Illness can be a great time of trial for people and their families, and I'm sure that almost all of us have had some experience of this. Such times can also cause spiritual problems, as we wonder where God is, why there seems to be no answer to our prayers for healing, and why he should let us undergo some times. The fact is that God and the support and solace of the Church and her Sacraments – even the spiritual communion we make - are always there, especially for the sick in their time of trial. But like the paralytic, we need to see through our sickness to the presence of Jesus, demonstrating our faith in his will, praying for ourselves and for others, and, as the late Cardinal Hume once said, using our illness, recognising it as time when we are perhaps closer to God than ever before.

If illness can bring us closer to God, sin is very much our wandering away from him. And yet, the forgiveness of God, and, most importantly, the Sacrament of the forgiveness and reconciliation with

God, is always there for us, again, at this time making a spiritual perfect act of contrition when we can't actually be in the confessional. So many people have abandoned this great Sacrament, or fear it so much, and yet it is such a sign of God's love for us. Yes, it causes us to look at ourselves, to look at our sinfulness and that might not be pleasant. But it also brings us face to face with the God who is love, and the God whose first words to a man of faith who was determined to see him were, *'My child, your sins are forgiven.'* So let us ask for forgiveness and healing.

Lord, I ask for Your forgiveness

For the wrongs that I have done

And the things that I have neglected.

I ask for Your forgiveness For the people I have hurt along the way

And those who I have failed to love as You love.

With gratefulness I receive Your forgiveness

And resolve in my heart That with Your strength

I determine not to make these errors again.

I receive Your forgiveness

And by the power of Your Holy Spirit

I walk away from everything I know to be wrong

And embrace everything I know about You

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are always and forever Yours.

Amen

And for a hymn today let's sing, one of my favourites, 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind, Forgive Our Foolish Ways.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faNij71hh7o>

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Bernard Hyland, whose funeral I will be celebrating in Manchester later today. *May he rest in the peace of Christ.*

In order to get to Manchester I have to be at Box Brothers Funeral Directors at 11am, and will be travelling in the hearse, setting off from the Carleton Club. You have to admit 'Box Brothers' is a very suitable name for a Funeral Director. Apparently, having a name suit your job is called an 'apronym'. Famous examples include Alan Ball, English footballer who played in England's 1966 World Cup winning team; Anna Smashnova, tennis player; Bob Flowerdew, gardener and Gardeners' Question Time panellist; Henry Head, an English neurologist; Margaret Spellings, Education Secretary under George W. Bush; Peter Bowler, cricketer who was, in fact, primarily a batsman (which would make him an inapronym, apparently); Pippa Greenwood, plant pathologist and Gardeners' Question Time panellist; and, from our own diocese, a priest who has now retired and lives in Malta, Father Peter Chapel. Any other atronym names you might know?

Your Name.

*You got it from your Father
It was all he had to give
So it's yours to cherish
As long as you may live
If you lose the watch he gave you
It can always be replaced
But a tarnish on your name, Son
Can never be erased.
It was clean the day you took it
And a worthy name to bear
When he got it from his father
There was no dishonour there
So make sure you guard it wisely
After all is said and done
You'll be glad the name is spotless
When you give it to your Son*

Yesterday I recorded the children's prayer video yesterday whilst walking on the prom – it was very blustery, but a beautiful day, and an appropriate place to thank God for all creation. But you can see in the attached pic, I definitely need that haircut!

I will give more details of our opening up for Mass in Friday's Message. Can we please have a meeting at 5pm in the Church tonight for all stewards and cleaners, and anyone who wants to come along and help. **So tonight in Church at 5pm**, we can have a proper rehearsal and try out and see what will work best? Please let Eileen or myself know if you can or can't come. Cheers.

Whatever you do today, make it a good day, and let's make it a good month. Masses will soon be beginning, so let's make that a great step in our world's covid rehabilitation.

Mass for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul is available on the YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6N4h8PodpVA&feature=youtu.be>

The official link for the Mass Sheet is

<https://www.rpbooks.co.uk/uploads/www.rpbooks.co.uk/15SsPeterPaul.pdf>

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.