

Wednesday December 2<sup>nd</sup>, Wednesday 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.

So lockdown is over, but Tier 3 is in, which at least means we can resume masses starting on Saturday evening. I look forward to seeing you over the next week.

I said at the beginning of the week that a lot of our liturgy of the word for the first week or so of Advent involved one of the Old Testament prophecies for the first reading, and seeing its fulfilment by Jesus in the Gospel. And that is most definitely the case today '*On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will prepare for all people a banquet of rich food.*' Today in Isaiah 25:6-10 we get a wonderful vision of heaven. In the new order, there will be peace and plenty of good things. Death will be destroyed forever. The Lord will wipe away the tear from every cheek, and we exult and rejoice that he has saved us.

And in the Gospel, Matthew 15:29-37, we see Jesus bringing about Isaiah's vision of a land of peace and plenty with his presence here on earth when he heals the many sick and feeds the multitude in the desert with just seven loaves and a few small fish, which itself foreshadows the eternal banquet in Heaven.

*God of grace, you invite us to a banquet,  
God of mercy, as you once again call us to  
your table, help us to respond in faith.  
Forgive our failures and help us to learn from them.  
Change our hearts and minds as we  
hear your good news proclaimed.  
Help us to taste and see the goodness  
you have prepared for us,  
and for the world.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Let us sing of Christ as the food we desire and raise him up as we sing 'I Am The Bread of Life.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvD0XJzOWQ4>

In the International Liturgical Calendar of the Church today is the Feast of St. Bibiana, a fourth century virgin and martyr. Some of you - not me, obviously – may find usage of her intercession over

the Christmas season. She was brought up in a happy, pious Christian family, all of whom were to suffer much persecution. Bibiana refused to renounce her faith, and so was sold to a rich woman, who tried to turn her into a prostitute. Again, Bibiana refused, and was made to drink molten lead, surely one of the most horrible martyrdoms. Her body was left for dogs to lick, and she was buried soon after. Fragrant herbs were said to have grown around her grave, the eating of which brought about sobriety, actually making St. Bibiana the Church's Patron Saint of hangovers.

*Dear Saint Bibiana,  
through your fasting and prayer  
you were given the grace to endure suffering and torment  
at the hands of your persecutors.  
Intercede for us, dear saint,  
that we also remember that our Lord is always there to strengthen us  
and give us the grace to persevere.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Of course, you may only need her intercession if you've been carousing with some other Patron Saints. St. Vincent of Saragossa, a fourth century Martyr, is perhaps the most well-known wine saint and is particularly venerated by French and Spanish winemakers, and St. Urban, who left France in 374 due to persecution and took refuge in a German vineyard is the favourite of German winemakers. There are several Patron Saints of Brewers, the most famous being Arnuf of Metz. After his death parishioners from his former diocese of Metz, who already venerated him as a saint, went to recover his body. The journey was during a particularly hot part of the year, and the travellers were ready to faint of thirst. One of the parishioners, by the name of Duc Notto, cried out, 'By his powerful intercession the Blessed Arnold will bring us what we lack.' Miraculously, their supply of beer was replenished and lasted until they returned home. But other Patron saints of Brewers include St. Augustine, who drank plenty of it in his youthhood, and, for some unknown reason, St. Luke, author of the third Gospel. If, after all of that, you need a coffee, then feel free to turn to Saint Drogo, born the son of a Flemish nobleman in 1105 in Flanders, patron saint of coffee and coffeehouses.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Rose Bradshaw whose funeral I will celebrate at Carleton Crematorium this afternoon at 2pm. *Me she rest in the peace of Christ.*

Last night there was a glorious full moon over Bispham, as you can see in the picture. Have a good day.

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.

P.S. 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. 5pm is filling up quickly. 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.