

Wednesday June 3rd, Wednesday in the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time Year Two

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 hope everyone is praying together for our all our intentions in this time of need.

A bit of a change in the weather as we wake up this morning to cloudy skies and a touch of rain, hopefully freshening things up a little after the hot sunny days of last week, and perhaps lessening the big gatherings on the beaches, which mightn't be a bad thing. We're thankful that in England we rarely (if ever?) have had to pray for rain, but that is not the case in all parts of the world, and lest we're thinking only of countries such as Africa or India, earlier this year the Catholic Church in Australia asked its countryfolk to pray the following prayer:

God of compassion,

we wait and watch for your gift of rain

to water the soil and make the barren land come alive again.

We wait and watch for the gift of salvation

to free us from hatred, greed and fear

so that we may live again as people of faith, hope and love.

We make this prayer in the name of our Saviour who comes to be with us. Amen.

Why don't we make our hymn this morning 'Our God Reigns'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Px_MlclwLEw

Today is the memorial of the Ugandan Martyrs, Saint Charles Lwanga and his Companions. In 1879 the first Catholic missions were started in Uganda and other parts of Central Africa. Under King Mtesa missionaries preached, people studied the faith, and many believed in Jesus. Unfortunately King Mtesa was succeeded by King Mwanga, who began persecuting the Christians in Uganda. Charles was a page in the court of the Mwanga. He protected his fellow pages, aged from just thirteen years old to thirty years old, and encouraged and instructed them in the Catholic faith during their imprisonment for refusing the ruler's unchristian demands. Imprisoned with his friends, Charles's courage and belief in God inspired them to remain faithful. For his own unwillingness to submit to the unchristian acts and his efforts to safeguard the faith of his friends, Charles was burned to death at Namugongo on June 3, 1886, by Mwanga's order. When Pope Paul VI canonized these 22 martyrs on October 18, 1964, he also made reference to the Anglican pages martyred for the same reason. St. Charles is the Patron Saint of African Catholic youth, and torture victims.

*O God,
who have made the blood of Martyrs the seed of Christians,
mercifully grant that the field which is your Church,
watered by the blood shed by Saint Charles Lwanga and his companions,
may be fertile and always yield you an abundant harvest.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

There is a definitely a general loosening of lockdown, and less strict rules at the Crematoriums and Cemeteries. Yesterday there were forty people at the graveside funeral I took at Lytham, all but the immediate family socially distancing themselves, and Carleton has gone back to forty-five minute services, which had been reduced to thirty minutes in April and May. There's news of all shops and some pubs and restaurants opening, and I received a text last night from 'The Brass Moustache' in Poulton saying there were making appointments for hair and beard trims in the not too distant future, so hopefully I won't have my 'corona quiff' for too much longer. Alas, no mention of Churches, although talking to friends in other dioceses, some are preparing for the opening of Churches for private worship, albeit with somewhat draconian measures in place.

As you are still not able to come into the Church for private prayer or to light a candle, I have done so for you, and prayed the prayer:

*Lord, may this candle be a light that you may enlighten me in my difficulties and decisions.
May it be a first to open my heart to the healing power of your love.
May it be a flame to warm my heart towards myself, my family and my neighbour.
Through the prayers of Mary, the Mother of the Church, I place in your love and care
all those for whom I now pray.
I cannot be with you at this time, but I know you are always with me.
In leaving this candle I wish to give you something of myself.
Help me to continue praising you in all I think and say and do this day.
Amen.*

And I attach a picture of the candle, in front of the Statue of the Sacred Heart.

There are medals, newsletters, and prayer sheets in the porch. Please take them for yourselves, family and friends, if you are passing the Church whilst on your healthy exercise walk.

Calling all our young people! Cadbury's Cream Eggs are now in the porch, sheltered from the sun opposite the R.I.P. board, and you are all welcome to take one. Don't forget, to take an egg, you have to place a picture of Tobias on the noticeboard above the basket of eggs. Put your name on it and there will be a prize for the one Tobias thinks is the best. The result will be announced next Sunday!

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost. 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; 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.