

Thursday December 3rd, Thursday 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.

Not a day for walking on the prom, methinks, gosh did it throw the rain down this morning. Let's hope we have all built our houses on rock...

Again in Isaiah 26:1-6 the prophet is extolling the great peace the Messiah will bring. Those who have trusted in him will be saved. He will bring down the haughty. *'Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord is the everlasting Rock.'*

And talking of the Lord being a rock, this is followed by Jesus giving us the Parable of the Man who built his house on rock, compared with the Man who built his house on sand, which collapsed in the storm, in Matthew 7:2. 24-27. It is important both to listen to the words of Jesus, and also to carry them out. Built on the rock of Jesus we can stand up to any storms that we may have to face.

Lord Jesus Christ,

You remind us over and over in your Word that you are always with us.

You tell us not to fear and you draw us close into your Presence.

You're the rock upon whom we should build our lives.

You're the only place we find refuge in the storms that surround us right now Lord.

You're the only place we can find peace and strength.

So we ask you for your words of truth and power to strengthen us

in our inner being and life our hearts to you

Thank you for your goodness,

thank you that you know the way we take and you have a plan.

We look to you today our Lord and Saviour,

It is indeed your face we seek.

Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

And let's have a great hymn of praise, how about 'Praise My Soul The King Of Heaven.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sx1eMwIDFb8> though you will have to google the words yourself.

And today is the memorial of St. Francis Xavier. Francis Xavier was born in Xavier Castle, near present day Pamplona in Spain (where they have the annual Bull Run) to a noble family. In 1525, he

went to study at the University of Paris and there he met Ignatius of Loyola, who had experienced a religious conversion while recovering from a war wound. On August 15, 1534, in the Montmartre section of Paris, Xavier, Loyola and five others pledged themselves to the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). In addition to vows of celibacy and poverty, they also promised to visit the Holy Land, but this proved impossible due to war, so Xavier instead went to Rome. Impressed by the Jesuits, King John III of Portugal asked the order for missionaries to work in his empire and Xavier stepped in when a fellow priest became ill. He left Rome on March 15, 1540.

Thus began Xavier's missionary journey throughout the world, working with the poor and seeking converts in Goa, India, Ceylon, the Molucca Islands, the Banda Islands and the Malay Peninsula, arriving in Japan in 1549. As he had at his other missions, Xavier arranged for the translation of religious texts. These steps helped him reach more converts in the year and a half he spent in Japan. Xavier's next focus for missionary work was China, but before he could find a way inside the country, illness struck him. He died on December 3, 1552, at the age of 46. His body was then taken to Goa.

Though he passed away at a relatively young age, Xavier had accomplished much in his life. In addition to being a founding member of the Jesuit order he baptized an estimated 30,000 people. Xavier was beatified by Pope Paul V in 1619, and canonized by Pope Gregory XV in 1622. He is now the patron saint of missionaries.

*Lord God, by the preaching of St. Francis Xavier
you brought many nations to yourself.
Give his zeal for the faith to all who believe in you,
that your Church may rejoice in continued growth
throughout the world.
May this prayer
fill us with the same love that inspired Francis Xavier
to work for the salvation of all.
Help us to live out our Christian calling
and to inherit the promise of eternal life.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.*

And let's say a prayer for all missionaries:

*Lord our God, loving Father, we humbly pray to you
for our beloved missionaries, heralds of the Gospel.
May our prayers reach their hearts
that they may feel our love, our strength, our faith.
that they continue with your zeal the mission you entrust them with.*

*May their presence in their communities be a reminder of your presence among us.
Amen.*

And what is a Missionary's favourite type of car? A convertible. Boom! Boom!

In other news, Tobias, the Presbytery Cat, looked suitable startled when I caught him messing around on the top shelf of the stationery cupboard (Lord knows how he got up there!).

Have a great day. If we've made it through lockdown, we can make it through the rain.

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. 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, and thank you for what has already come in.