

Saturday April 4<sup>th</sup>, Saturday in the Fifth Week in Lent Year A.

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.

Another beautiful prayer in this Saturday's Mass: the blessing for the end of Mass prayed:

*Have mercy, Lord, on your Church,  
as she brings her supplications,  
and be attentive to those who incline their hearts before you;  
do not allow, we pray, those you have redeemed by the death of your Son,  
to be weighed down by their trials,  
though Christ our Lord. Amen.*

So let's not be weighed down by the trials we are all currently undergoing, and ask the Lord, to increase and deepen our faith at this time.

So we now approach Holy Week, a very different week from the one we were expecting at the beginning of Lent – things seemed to have moved so quickly. Us clergy have been given instructions as to how to celebrate the Easter services, with solemnity but simplicity, and I will do so at the usual hours – as you can see on the newsletter. As you'd expect there's be no washing of feet, kissing of the cross, or Easter Fire, but the Paschal Candle will be blessed, I'll be belting out the Exultet and the Gloria, and there's plenty of prayers to be said, and of course the beautiful Easter readings to be proclaimed. Let's all try the best way we can to celebrate the Easter services. The Bishop has also written to us with a very encouraging message. As you'd expect, several of our priests are self-isolating, and of course many are over seventy years old, and so far one priest has coronavirus, but is doing very well. Please keep us all in your prayers.

The readings of Holy Week always take me back a few years ago when I had a three day whistle stop tour of the Holy Land. To visit the places Christ actually walked, and think of all the events that take place was incredibly moving, and those of you have been on pilgrimage there will know what I mean. The Way of the Cross takes on a whole new dimension when you have actually walked down the Via Dolorosa, stopped at Veronica's door where she came out to wipe Jesus' face and so on. I'll try and send some photos, but I have to reduce their size or something as they are too big to email.

We've been mailing and delivering copies of the DVD to those who requested one, and copies are still available in the porch, or just email if you'd like one. We've been trying to get as many palm crosses out there too, again, email if you'd like one delivered, or take one from the porch when you're on your daily walk, for yourselves and for friends and family. It's been lovely to see some of you out on the prom doing your healthy exercise walk. I've been keeping up with the steps, not least when I'm walking round the Church saying my Divine Office each day – I think we may need a new carpet in Church when all this is over! Many thanks for all the offerings that have been put through the letter box, the requests to start standing orders, and the food and donations that have been made for Food Sunday. Your generosity in these hardened times has been incredible, and incredibly moving. Many thanks and blessings.

There's quite a few attachments with this mail – the newsletter, the readings, the bidding prayers, the Gospel, and also a Holy Week poster which you may like to print out and put in your window. They can also be collected from the Church porch. On the weekend we are celebrating the Lord's triumphal entry into his city, let's make today's hymn one of my favourites: 'Hail Redeemer, King Divine'  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1drtim65OAO>

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. 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.