

Friday December 4th, Friday 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.

It's been a chilly first week of Advent, which has seen some snow in various parts of the country. I wonder if we'll be having a white Christmas?

In Isaiah 29:17-24 the prophet tells us that in this new world of peace, the lowly will rejoice in the Lord, the poor will exult, and the blind will see. Scoffers, tyrants and gossipers will be eliminated. Stand in awe before the God, the holy one of Jacob. *'No longer shall Jacob be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale, for he shall what the hands of the Lord have done in his midst.'*

And as has been the pattern this week, we see the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy in Jesus Christ, as he heals a blind man, as recorded in Matthew 9:27-31. Let us pray that any spiritual blindness that is in us will be healed so that we can accept the message of Christ in full.

*Lord,
open our eyes to the light of your love,
guard us from spiritual blindness,
which prevents us from knowing you fully,
and following in your way of truth and grace.
Help us to share the light of your love,
that, together, we will one day share the light of heaven.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.*

Two hymns today, as you might not know the first one – I certainly haven't sung it for years, but the Gospel reminded me of it: 'I Saw The Grass, I Saw The Trees' about the healing of the blind man, and how it alerts him to world which is not always beautiful, but can be made beautiful through gazing on the face of Christ. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bymzUcfb1RE> You'll have to google the words. But one we can all know and sing is 'Shine, Jesus, Shine' opening our eyes to the light of Christ's love. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr5Y63bDNNg>

And our saint today is St. John Damascene. He was born in the middle of the seventh century in Damascus in Syria, which at the time was under Muslim rule. Little is known about his life, but we do know that he became a monk in the monastery of St. Sabbas near Jerusalem. He is considered to be

the last eastern Father of the Church, and was declared a doctor of the Church in 1890 due to his great theological writings, and also many poems and hymns, including 'The Day of Resurrection' which is one I don't think we actually sing, certainly I don't know it, but the words are beautiful.

*The day of resurrection! Earth, tell it out abroad;
The Passover of gladness, The Passover of God.
From death to life eternal, From earth unto the sky,
Our Christ hath brought us over, With hymns of victory.
Our hearts be pure from evil, That we may see aright
The Lord in rays eternal Of resurrection light;
And list'ning to His accents, May hear, so calm and plain,
His own "All hail!" and, hearing, May raise the victor strain.
Now let the heav'ns be joyful! Let earth the song begin!
Let the round world keep triumph, And all that is therein!
Let all things seen and unseen Their notes in gladness blend,
For Christ the Lord hath risen, Our joy that hath no end.*

And here is Gloucester Cathedral Choir singing the Hymn. Hopefully by Easter next year we will be all sing hymns together about the day of resurrection.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgIx_0jhW1Y

*Grant, we pray, O Lord,
that we may be helped by the prayers
of the priest Saint John Damascene,
so that the true faith, which he excelled in teaching,
may always be our light and strength.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

In other news, Tobias the Presbytery Cat wanted to demonstrate to you all the well-known phrase 'an apple a day keeps the vet away'.

Have a great end to the week, and I am so looking forward to seeing some of you at Mass tomorrow evening at 5pm. and at our masses throughout next week. Don't forget to book in for our Christmas masses!

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.