

Sunday April 5th, Palm / Passion Sunday 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.

Let's all pray the opening prayer of today's Mass of Palm Sunday:

*Six days before the Passover, when the Lord came in to the city of Jerusalem,
the children ran to meet him; in their hands they carried palm branches
and with a loud voice cried out;*

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed are you who have come in your abundant mercy!

O gates, lift high your heads; grow higher, ancient doors.

Let him enter the king of glory!

Who is this King of glory?

He, the Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed are you who have come in your abundant mercy!

And let's all join in singing today's hymn 'Give Me Joy In My Heart'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-RIN8VRGDI>

Let's not forget however how soon the cries of 'Hosanna' turned into cries of 'Crucify Him'. This is not just Palm Sunday, but also Passion Sunday, when this year we read the Passion of the Christ according to Matthew. Holy Week has now begun, and whilst we all look forward to the light of Easter, firstly we have to go through the darkness of Good Friday. Through these dark times let us continue to look forward to the day when we can all come out into the light, together. You might like to spiritually join me saying the Stations of the Cross this afternoon. Let's pray the days of Holy Week together, recalling all the events in the last seven days on Earth of our Messiah, from his meal with Marth and Mary, though his betrayal by Judas, his denying by Peter, his Last Supper, his Passion, and the joyful of events of that first Easter Sunday. The Liturgy Office of the Bishop's Conference of England Wales has helpfully provided us with some texts for the coming week, and they are all downloadable at <http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Flu/index.shtml>

Don't forget that Palms and DVDs are still available in the porch, which you can pick up when on your healthy exercise walk, remembering all instructions regarding social distancing. Please feel free to take several palms to pass on to friends, family and neighbours. And once again, huge thanks for all the food that people have been bringing to the house and the porch, it really is overwhelming. I'll tell you more about how it will be distributed tomorrow.

So, a couple of poems for you today. Yes, your actual culture. The first was sent to me yesterday, and is by G.K.Chesterton, who you may know as the author of the 'Father Brown' mysteries, and several spiritual writings. There is actually a movement to have him canonized. He wrote this poem, more than appropriate for today;

'The Donkey' by G K Chesterton

*When fishes flew and forests walked,
And figs grew upon thorn
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born.*

*With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devils walking parody
On all four footed things*

*The tattered outlaw of the earth
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me; I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.*

*Fools! For I also had my hour
One far fierce hour and sweet,
When there were shouts about my ears,
And palms before my feet.*

I was also sent this poem by a priest I was at college with, Fr. Rob Esdaile, which he has written especially for today:

'Palmless Sunday' by Rob Esdaile

*We gather virtually these days,
with virtual palms and virtual cries of praise.
Virtual cloaks we scatter underfoot
to greet the Son of David whom we long to meet.*

*Two metres wide (at least) the Covid social distancing
that separates the would-be members of the crowd
as we avoid quite gathering to greet him
sanitised, clean-handed at the city gate.*

*But there is nothing virtual about the Prince of Peace,
subverting all our violent dreams of glory
with his choice of gentle cross-marked beast
to humbly carry him to Zion for the Feast.*

*Nothing virtual either in the bonds that link us all today
in honouring the ones who risk their lives to make us well;
in worrying for the elders home alone;
in understanding pressures hid behind closed doors.*

*Communion, then, is this: this web of praying, caring,
picking up the phone, dropping round some food,
sharing (at safe distance) smiles and tears,
this swopping words of hope for fears.*

*This is what we celebrate on Sundays in more normal times.
This is what our breaking bread and sharing cup proclaims:
that the Easter Lord still comes to share our little feast,
comes even through locked doors with words of peace.*

And huge thanks to the Parishioners who passed those poems on to me.

In other news, in these Cat Treat rationing times, Tobias, the Presbytery Cat, has taken to trying to hypnotize me into given him more treats. In the attached picture his eyes are clearly saying, 'Forget

Tipping Point... just give me the treats.' Oh, and I also add Eileen's beautifully knitted Palm Sunday scene. I can't wait to see her knitted 'Last Judgement.'

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.