

Monday October 5th, Monday in the Twenty-Seventh Week In Ordinary Time Year II

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.

Morning everyone. Email is playing havoc on the computer at the moment, so don't know if anyone received yesterday's message or whether you'll receive this one! I've been told that some people got it at bedtime, while others received it at breakfast. And if you don't receive it I am typing to myself like a crazy person. Hey-hooooooo....

And today we have a Diocesan Feast – the Feast of the Dedication of St. Peter's Cathedral in Lancaster, Mother Church of this Diocese of Lancaster.

St Peter's church was consecrated on 4th October 1859, dedicated to God as a new Catholic parish church for Lancaster. In 1924 it became the Cathedral Church of the new Diocese of Lancaster, and now has served parish, city and diocese for 150 years. The Cathedral has seen many changes in its life so far, adapting and responding to a changing society and the reforms of the Church's liturgy after the Second Vatican Council. About twenty five years ago it received a major re-ordering which has made it a beautiful liturgical space for parish and diocesan services.

The word cathedral comes from a Latin word meaning 'seat.' The seat referred to is the seat of the bishop, who is the leader of the group of churches related to the cathedral. The bishop's seat is both a metaphor for the cathedral as the bishop's 'seat of power' and his actual chair, the 'cathedra,' inside the cathedral – and in Lancaster we have the 'old chair' in wood, and the new one since the re-ordering.

When we celebrate this Feast we are celebrating our Diocese, that we are not isolated parishes but a family of Churches, all seeking to journey to the Kingdom of God, supporting each other through prayers and a common goal. We also celebrate the fact that we have many beautiful Churches throughout the diocese in which we, the Church, gather. I hope lockdown has made us more appreciative of the times we can gather together and celebrate our masses.

There are two sets of prayers for this feast; one to be said in the cathedral itself, and another for those of us who are celebrating this feast outside of the cathedral. They are all particularly lovely:

*O God, who from living stones*

*prepare an eternal dwelling for your majesty,  
increase in your Church the grace you have bestowed,  
so that by unceasing growth  
your faithful people may build up the heavenly Jerusalem.  
For in your benevolence  
you are pleased to dwell in this house of prayer,  
in order to perfect us as a temple of the Holy Spirit,  
supported by the perpetual help of your grace  
and resplendent with the glory of a life acceptable to you.  
Year by year you sanctify the Church, the Bride of Christy,  
foreshadowed in visible buildings,  
so that, rejoicing as the mother of countless children,  
she may be given her place in your heavenly glory.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

And let's sing 'Praise My Soul The King Of Heaven'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyRIVbdsi4c>

I was an assistant priest at the Cathedral from 1997-2000 – many, many moons ago! It was an interesting post, as, as well as carrying out your usual priestly ministry - sick communions, hospital chaplaincy etc. - you were often hosting events or gatherings, be it huge diocesan occasions, visiting speakers and concerts, and so on. I also recall it being freezing cold – to the left of the altar there was a door which led out to the cemetery and the wind would whistle through, making my hands sometimes so cold it was difficult to minister Holy Communion! They've since had a new boiler installed, fortunately. The big liturgies were beautiful, and I loved Easter - when I always sang the Exultet - and the huge, jam packed Midnight Mass at Christmas. In the re-ordering twenty-five years ago, a beautiful corona of candles was hung above the main altar which could be raised and lowered. At Easter and Christmas the corona would be at altar level, and then, during the Gloria – with accompany trumpets – it would be raised to roof level, spinning around as it got higher and higher. I remember one year we had a visiting American priest who was lecturing at Lancaster University. As the corona was being raised he turned to me and said, 'My gosh, it's better than 'Phantom of the Opera'!' And he was probably right. I don't have many photos of my time there, but I attach one of me holding a baptism for the schoolchildren - and just behind me you can see the 'old' Bishop's Church. I look about twelve years old – it *was* twenty years ago.

The weekend masses were all lovely, but apologies if I am somewhat jet-lagged at the Saturday evening Mass, as I recover from this virus thingy. From next week Ian will be recording Mass on Sunday Morning, so you may receive the link slightly later, but hopefully it will be slightly perkier.

You may even get a hymn! For those who come to whichever Mass, please keep to all the rules about social distancing, not moving around, not gathering in groups to chit-chat, and wearing a mask at all times when in the Church and its environs. And don't forget if you have the track and trace app you can sign in with the squiggly doo-dah.

Anyway, I hope you get this message, and, even if you don't I'm still hoping you have a lovely day.

Saturday evening's (somewhat droopy and very coughing) Mass was recorded and available on the YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYySDK388Uc&feature=youtu.be>

Texts for each day can be found at <http://universalis.com/mass.htm>

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, though the building is, most of the time. 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.