

Saturday December 5th, Saturday 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.

And here we are at the second weekend of Advent, but the first week we can come together to celebrate Mass, and light our Advent candles. Still no singing, alas – I do hope they change that rule for Christmas, but I'm not sure they will. We may have to practice a bit of signing so that we can all join in.

It's back to our 'new normal' timetable of Masses at 5pm on Saturday evening, 10am Sunday Morning, and 12noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays. If it is possible I would like to keep the Sunday Holy Hour between 12noon and 1pm – let me know what you think about the idea. Is Sunday the best day? Or Wednesday? Over to you.

We will continue to stream and record the two Sunday Masses, although we are still having a few teething troubles – Rome was certainly not built in a day. Consulting our indefatigable videographer, Ian, apparently if you join the live view late, while we are still streaming live, and start to watch from the beginning, the sound and vision will be fuzzy as the stream is still uploading. Apparently the solution is to drag the red dot on the video progress bar to the right to get a satisfactory result. (Personally I didn't understand a word of that). Keep me posted as to how your viewing is going.

Ok. Today's Scriptures! Isaiah continues to sing about the new peaceful world brought about by the Messiah. Weep no more, he tells the people in Isaiah 30:19-21.23-26. The Lord knows what you need and will supply you with all good things. There will be good harvests.

And the metaphor of good harvests is taken up by Jesus in Matthew 9:35-10:1,6-8. Here harvest refers to the creating of a community of followers of Jesus, but *'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest.'* With these words Jesus sends his disciples out to bring his Good News to all peoples, *'You received without charge, give without charge.'* The kingdom of heaven is indeed at hand.

Lord, give me your heart for the nations.

A heart of love and compassion for the lost.

A renewed love of the gospel and a deep admiration and concern

for those who are already giving their lives in service to you.

*Provide for them, encourage them,
prosper their work and embolden their hearts.
Raise up and equip more workers for Your harvest fields.
Fill them with your spirit,
deliver them from the evil one
and empower them to boldly proclaim
and represent You and Your Word to the world, until you return.
Help me to be obedient to your voice and do my part in advancing your kingdom on earth.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

And as the days of Advent slip by let our hymn today be ‘Lord For Tomorrow And It’s Needs... Just For Today.’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9XMj9jrL6s>

So I thought I’d dig up an Advent quiz for you, this one focusing on some of the Saints and Feasts we celebrate within the Advent season. If you’ve been assiduously reading these Messages over the past week, you’ll definitely know the answer to some of them, but I’ll be telling you more about the others in the coming weeks. Answers are at the very end of the Message.

1. Can you name the great feast of Mary on December 8th?
2. What has the feast got to do with the South of France (and this Parish)?
3. Who is the brother of St. Peter whose feast we celebrate on November 30th?
4. Of which country is the brother of St. Peter patron Saint?
5. Can you name the patron saints of England, Ireland and Wales?
6. December 6th is the feast of someone closely associated with Christmas. Who is it?
7. Name the Jesuit missionary who died on his way from Goa to China in 1552. Feast on December 3rd.
8. Can you name the saint who had 6 children and went on to found a religious order? Feast day is December 12th.
9. Elected Bishop of Milan by popular acclaim he is one of the great teachers of the faith. Who is he? Feast on December 7th.
10. One of the early Christian martyrs was born in Syracuse. Who could that be? Feast on December 13th.
11. Friend of Teresa of Avila, celebrated spiritual writer and reformer. Feast on December 14th. Who is it?
12. Who wrote ‘The Ascent of Mount Carmel’?

If you’ve got your daily missal handy, you might find it quite useful! Together let’s say a beautiful Advent prayer:

With expectant waiting we anticipate your coming.

Come close to us, Lord, come very close.

Come, Alpha and Omega, who is from before the ages.

Come, Son of Joseph and Son of Mary, who went down to Nazareth to be obedient to them.

Come, Morning Star, who named the stars.

Come, carpenter from Nazareth, who knows the smell of planed wood.

Come, Beloved Son of God, who knows the heart of God.

Come, Son of Man, who knows the hearts of God's people.

Come, Lord of Life and Prince of Peace.

Come, Dayspring and Rising Sun.

Come, Wonderful Counsellor.

Come Emmanuel, God with us;

God very close to us.

Amen.

I love the bit about 'who knows the smell of planed wood.' This weekend I recorded a mini video for Year 6, as they were studying the phrase from St. John's Gospel, 'And the Word was made flesh,' and I was trying to explain the meaning of 'flesh' here, pointing out that this means that Christ was truly God, but also truly human, he wasn't God 'dressed up as a man' (the heresy of Docetism). And being truly human he had all the senses that we had, he saw, he heard, he tasted, he touched, and, yes, he would have known the smell of planed wood. He experienced human emotions, he laughed, he cried. And having all these senses in the flesh, it also meant he truly felt physical agony at the crucifixion. God didn't become *like* a human being. He became a human being in the flesh. The Word made flesh.

In other news, as you can see, Tobias, the Presbytery Cat, is as hooked on 'Tipping Point' as me, joining me for it with a few treats every evening.

So very much looking forward to seeing some of you at Mass this evening at 5pm. and over the coming week. Have a great weekend.

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.

The Answers to the Advent Quiz.

1. The Immaculate Conception
2. This was the title of Our Lady given to Bernadette at Lourdes in the south of France
3. St. Andrew
4. Scotland
5. St. George, St. Patrick and St. David
6. St. Nicholas
7. St. Francis Xavier
8. St. Jane Frances de Chantal
9. St. Ambrose
10. St. Lucy
11. St. John of the Cross
12. St. John of the Cross