

Monday April 6th, Monday in Holy Week.

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.

And so Holy Week has begun, certainly not the Holy Week we imagined when Lent began six five short weeks ago. From only giving communion under one kind on the hand, to the Church being completely closed seems to have happened so quickly. Let's continue to hope and pray that soon we will all be celebrating together once again. We have to heed the final verse of this morning's psalm:

*I am sure I will see the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living.
Hope in him, hold firm and take heart.
Hope in the Lord!*

This morning's Gospel (John 12:1-11) takes us to six days before the Passover when Jesus visited Mary, Martha and Lazarus. 'Mary bought in a pound of very costly ointment, pure nard, and with it anointed the feet of Jesus', in preparation for his burial. Last Friday, the 3rd April, would usually have seen our Anointing of the sick mass at 2pm. This is always the most beautiful of masses, with up to fifty people, several from other parishes, gathering to celebrate the Eucharist and receive the Anointing with the Oil of the Infirm. Often a small group of children from the school will come along, which is a great and friendly introduction for them to the Sacrament. The presence of the Holy Spirit is truly palpable as I walk round the Church, praying over each person:

*Through this Holy Anointing may the Lord help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit.
May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.*

We should remember that the Anointing of the Sick is no longer referred to as 'Last Rites', but a sacramental prayer for comfort and healing of mind, body and soul, whenever we need it. Let us hope that we will be able to celebrate the First Friday mass again in the not too distant future. In the meantime, let us pray for all the sick at this time, especially those in hospital:

Jesus, Miracle Worker, when You called the twelve disciples to You, You gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. I declare that by Your wounds I am healed and by Your power I am healed! I pray that You heal all manner of sickness and disease so that we can be made whole by You, Amen

This morning all the food that has been brought into the Church or the presbytery was divided up to go to those in need. An extraordinary amount was brought in – almost as much as a ‘usual’ Food Sunday – as you can see from the attached picture. Huge thanks to everyone who has contributed with bags of food, and also those who sent financial donations or made an extra offering into the Parish Account. The financial donations will be used to buy Tesco vouchers for some of our needy families in Blackpool, and the food has been divided up to go to the presbytery for the callers at the door, the School, Fleetwood Food Bank and the local Women’s Refuge. Once again, thanks and blessings to you all. It’s great to see us all trying to ‘do our bit’ in whatever way we can in this time of crisis. If you can think of any other ways we can ‘reach out’ at this time, please let me know.

In other news, my brother in Hong Kong phoned to say he was sending me a box of surgical masks. Apparently the one I’ve been wearing is not the right kind to combat viruses. I thought I was getting some funny looks when I was on the prom doing my healthy exercise walk, as you might see in the attachment...

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.