

Thursday October 8th, Thursday 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.

Paul's wrath is in full flow with the Galatians today. In Galatians 3:1-5 he asks, *'Has someone put a spell on you? You want the Law; but did God give you the Spirit so freely and work miracles among you because of the Mosaic law, or because you believed what was preached to you?'*

And, following on from teaching us the pattern of all prayer yesterday, today in Luke 11:5-13 Jesus is continuing his lesson on prayer. In this passage Jesus really *invites* us to pray, with all our needs, conscious that they will always be heard by our loving Father, who grants all the needs of his children, and will even grant the Holy Spirit to those who ask him, *'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you... If you then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?'* The Novena Prayer to the Infant of Prague makes use of this passage of Scripture – and we all have many petitions and intentions at this time.

*O Jesus, Who has said, 'Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened,' through the intercession of Mary, Your Most Holy Mother, I knock, I seek, I ask that my prayer be granted.*

*O Jesus, Who has said, 'All that you ask of the Father in My Name, He will grant you,' through the intercession of Mary Your Most Holy Mother, I humbly and urgently ask your Father in your name that my prayer will be granted.*

*O Jesus, Who has said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away but My word shall not pass away,' through the intercession of Mary Your Most Holy Mother, I feel confident that my prayer will be granted.*

For our hymn today let us sing 'All My Hope On God Is Founded'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3LCGh02Vew>

And I attach a picture of the actual Infant of Prague that I took a few years ago in the Discaled Carmelite Church of Our Lady Victorious in, Prague. They dress the statue up for the various liturgical seasons.

This week a parishioner sent me a copy of letter which has been signed by over seven hundred Christian Church leaders and communities. I had heard nothing about it, and, as has been the case, I don't recall any mention of it in our diocese (I think it originated in Portsmouth). The letter is directed to our Governments and leaders, and I reproduce it in full. It makes for an interesting and powerful read.

*Dear Prime, First and Deputy First Ministers,*

*As church leaders from across the four nations of the UK, we have been deeply concerned about the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic across society. We have carefully followed government guidance to restrict its spread. But increasingly our concern relates to the damaging effects of anti-Covid restrictions on many of the most important aspects of life.*

*Our God-given task as Christian ministers and leaders is to point people to Jesus Christ, who said he came to bring 'life in all its fullness'. Therefore we are troubled by policies which prioritise bare existence at the expense of those things that give quality, meaning and purpose to life. Increasingly severe restrictions are having a powerful dehumanising effect on people's lives, resulting in a growing wave of loneliness, anxiety and damaged mental health. This particularly affects the disadvantaged and vulnerable in our society, even as it erodes precious freedoms for all. In our churches, many have been working tirelessly to provide help to those most affected.*

*We entirely support proportionate measures to protect those most vulnerable to SARS-CoV-2. But we question whether the UK Government and the devolved administrations have it in their power either to eliminate this virus or to suppress it for an indefinite period while we await a vaccine. And we cannot support attempts to achieve these which, in our view, cause more damage to people, families and society – physically and spiritually – than the virus itself.*

*The public worship of the Christian church is particularly essential for our nation's wellbeing. As we live in the shadow of a virus we are unable to control, people urgently need the opportunity to hear and experience the good news and hope of Jesus Christ, who holds our lives in his hands. The supportive relationships that churches nurture between people are vital, and simply cannot be dispensed with again without significant harm. And most of all, we know that regular gathering to worship God is essential for human life to be lived to the full.*

*We have been and will remain, very careful to apply rigorous hygiene, social distancing and appropriate risk assessment in our churches. As a result, church worship presents a hugely lesser risk of transmission than pubs, restaurants, gyms, offices and schools; and it is more important than them all. We therefore wish to state categorically that we must not be asked to suspend Christian worship again. For us to do so would cause serious damage to our congregations, our service of the nation, and our duty as Christian ministers.*

*We therefore call upon the Westminster and devolved governments to find ways of protecting those who truly are vulnerable to Covid-19 without unnecessary and authoritarian*

*restrictions on loving families, essential personal relationships, and the worship of the Christian Church.*

*Yours faithfully.*

What do you think? With news of further restrictions, it might be quite prescient.

I was also sent this rather lovely prayer which comes from the Salvation Army

*Heavenly Father, loving and merciful God, we worship and adore You. In faith, we come before You asking for mercy and forgiveness for our sins against You and Your creation.*

*In this time of anxiety and distress, we lift up to You the COVID-19 situation throughout the world. Abba Father, we beg You to halt the spread of this disease and to grant healing and comfort to those afflicted. Please cover everyone with the Precious Blood of Your Son, Jesus and protect all of us, especially those in the medical field, from any infection and harm.*

*Holy Spirit Lord, please breathe peace and new life into everyone. May You grace us with a strong sense of social responsibility to do the necessary, and to be prudent and considerate in our actions. Bless all people to work together as one family of God and to be compassionate to one another.*

*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Anything you may have which might make us smile, please email it to me, so I can share it with everyone in this ever restricted times. Have a great 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.