

Thursday April 9<sup>th</sup>, Maundy Thursday.

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.

Today, of course, is Maundy Thursday, as we celebrate the day the Lord demonstrated love and service when he washed the feet of his disciples, when he gave us himself to be with us forever in the form of bread and wine at the Last Supper, and when he wept tears, alone, in the Garden of Gethsemane. It's also the day he gave us the new commandment to 'love one another, as I have loved you'. How could this be a *new* commandment, when God had been encouraging people to live in love and harmony throughout the Old Testament? It was new because it was a calling to love as Jesus loves us, and the following day on the cross he was to give us his ultimate salvific act of love when he died on the cross for us. It's this commandment to love which gives Maundy Thursday its name, from the Latin *mandatum*, commandment.

But that's not the only commandment Jesus gave us on the night before he died. As the Eucharist was celebrated for the very first time he told us to '*Do this in memory of me*' (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) in tonight's second reading. Even if we can't be present at the Eucharist today, we can still make a spiritual communion.

*My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.*

*I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.*

*Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,*

*come at least spiritually into my heart.*

*I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.*

*Never permit me to be separated from You.*

And there was a third commandment given too. After Jesus had washed the feet of his disciples in tonight's Gospel (John 13:1-15) he said '*I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done for you.*' In these strange times we can look for many opportunities to express charity and service towards others, even the most simple act of picking up the phone, or continuing to offer up our prayers.

There would usually be a lot happening liturgically today. Today is the day that we normally celebrate the Chrism Mass in our Diocese at the Cathedral in Lancaster. I imagine a number of you were planning to attend. It is the occasion in the year when the oils that are to be used in the Sacraments are consecrated and blessed, and that the priests of the diocese renew their ordination promises in the presence of Bishop Paul and of the gathered people. Although the Chrism Mass usually takes place in Holy Week it can be moved to another time of year so Bishop Paul hopes that we can have a Chrism Mass later in the year once the current situation has passed. Meanwhile please remember the bishop, your priests, and all those who will celebrate Sacraments (including the Sacrament of the Sick) over the coming year. The Bishop has asked us all to privately renew our ordination promises today, in front of the Blessed Sacrament, so later today I will go in to the Church and pray:

*With humility and faith,*

*I, Peter Damian Clarke*

*resolve to be more united with you and more closely conformed to you,*

*denying myself and confirming those promises about sacred duties towards your Church*

*which, prompted by love of you,*

*I willingly and joyfully pledged on the day I was ordained a priest.*

And then this evening we would have celebrated our wonderful Mass of the Lord's Supper, including our re-enacting of the Washing of the Feet. Please remember particularly our First Holy Communion children who would have led us in this mass, having their feet washed, and leading the Blessed Sacrament Procession, as we take the Holy Eucharist to the Altar of Repose. Hopefully we will be able to resume the Holy Communion Course soon, and the children can continue their Sacramental journey. I attach a picture taken at last year's Mass. After the Blessed Sacrament has been placed in the tabernacle on the Lady Altar, we would then strip the sanctuary till it is bare, save only for the wooden altar and the Tabernacle, empty, its doors wide open, as silently we watch and pray, thinking of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane:

*Oh, what wondrous love I see, Freely shown for you and me,*

*By the One Who did atone!*

*Just to show His matchless grace, Jesus suffered for the race,*

*In Gethsemane, alone.*

*"Tarry here," He told the three, "Tarry here and watch for Me,"*

*But they heard no bitter moan;*

*For the three disciples slept, While my loving Saviour wept*

*In Gethsemane, alone.*

*Long in anguish deep was He, Weeping there for you and me,  
For our sin to Him was known;  
We should love Him evermore, For the anguish that He bore  
In Gethsemane, alone.*

For today's hymn I suggest the 'Pange Lingua', 'Of The Glorious Body Telling' which we always sing during the Eucharistic Procession, and which concludes with the *Tantum Ergo*. You can sing it in English

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nVBNxfJ-oA>

or the Latin Plainchant.

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

I will leave all the lights on in Church till 10pm when I'll go in and say the Night Prayer of the Church. Please enjoin yourselves spiritually today praying the Gospel, or watching one of the many streamed services. And it would be great if we could say Night Prayer together at 10am.

In your prayers, please pray the *Eternal Rest* for the repose of the soul of Nigel Bradley, whose funeral I celebrated at 8:30am this morning with just his daughter and friend. *Requiescat in pace*.

And finally, in other news, Tobias, the Presbytery Cat has asked that we all 'paws for thought' for cats who own people who are working on the front line at this time, and ensure there are always Treats left on shop shelves for them. I attach a picture of him thoughtfully meditating on our amazing NHS workers, and all carers and key workers at this time.

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.

