

Friday October 9th, Friday 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.

I guess we are all waiting for Monday's announcement about the new restriction and where they will be. Chatting to people it seems that we will still be able to open Churches, but keep up the prayers, and feel free to get in touch with local MPs. I was shown a little picture yesterday, which I attach, and which sums up how a lot of us feel at the moment.

Paul is still refuting the Judaizers in Galatians 3:7-14. He reminds them that Abraham became the Father of the Chosen People through faith and not through the law, which didn't exist then. It was through Christ that the pagans received the blessing of Abraham. Through faith we have received the promised Spirit.

And Jesus' treatise on prayer continues in Luke 11:15-26. From prayer you will get the strength to fight the evil that is all around you. The power of God will cast this evil away from you. If we substitute the word 'evil' for 'covid-19', it might help us continue to pray through this crisis.

Lord Jesus Christ, you travelled through towns and villages curing every disease and illness. At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.

Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their health and strength.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents neighbours from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders.

Good Lord, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.

May those who have died from the virus rest in peace and rise in glory.

Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know your protection and peace.

Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with prudence and charity for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve.

Stay with us, Lord, and grant us your peace.

Amen.

Let us sing ‘Lay Your Hands Gently Upon Us, Let Your Touch Render Your Peace.’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=746MuTXmgnc>

And today we have a National Feast of England and Wales, one of the most recent, actually *the* most recent English Saint, John Henry Newman. John was born on 21st February 1801 the eldest son of a London banker. His family were ordinary church-going members of the Church of England. They had no strong religious tendencies, but John Henry did develop a love for the Bible. As a young man, he studied at Trinity College, Oxford and came under the influence of other colleagues who taught him to think critically about theology. He was a very successful student and read widely. He was ordained as an Anglican Vicar and had a charismatic influence on his parishioners and members of the community.

A series of events within the Church of England caused him to question his spiritual path within the Anglican faith. He withdrew from Oxford and for three years led a very strict religious life, praying for light and guidance. In 1845, he knew his path lay within Catholicism and on 9th October of that year, he was received into the Roman Catholic Church. His choice to convert to Catholicism meant he was ostracized by his family and friends, but undeterred, he set out to study for the priesthood and he was ordained a priest in Rome. He returned to England and founded the first Oratorian Congregation in Birmingham, with a second in London and established the Oratory School in Birmingham. In 1851 the Bishops of Ireland decided that there should be a separate University for Catholic students. John Henry became its founder and first Rector, establishing what is known today as University College Dublin.

In 1879, Pope Leo XIII made John Henry Newman a Cardinal in tribute to his extraordinary work and devotion. At his death in 1890, it was said that he had done more than any other person to change the attitude of non-Catholics to Catholics. Between 15,000 to 20,000 people lined the streets to pay their respects at his funeral. The Cork Examiner noted ‘Cardinal Newman goes to his grave with the singular honour of being by all creeds and classes acknowledged as the just man made perfect’. Newman's beatification was officially proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI on 19 September 2010 during his visit to the United Kingdom. His canonisation was officially approved by Pope Francis on 12 February 2019, and took place on 13 October 2019. He is the fifth saint of the City of London, behind Thomas Becket, Thomas More, Edmund Campion and Polydore Plasden (which sounds like the name of a Prog Rock group).

*O God, who bestowed on the Priest Saint John Henry Newman
the grace to follow your kindly light and find peace in your Church,
graciously grant that through his intercession and example*

*we may be led out of shadows and images into the fullness of your truth.
Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, you Son,
who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit.
one God for ever and ever.*

And let us sing Newman's hymn 'Lead Kindly Light'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fNjEgbsNmI>

By the way, if ever you want to get a good understanding of the theology of Purgatory, check out Newman's poem 'The Dream of Gerontius' or it's set-to-music version by Elgar. Actually, I'll talk about that in November, the month of the Holy Souls.

Talking of singing, for my children's video yesterday I sang and signed 'Peace Perfect Peace' and asked the children in their classroom bubbles to sign along with me. I had a mail from one of the teachers this morning to say how much the children had enjoyed it. It might be a way for us to get some music into our non-singing masses! Or are we allowed to sing if we are wearing masks? It's all very confusing. There is a possibility that we will start a YouTube channel with a morning prayer video for each day, so watch this space for more news.

I hope you all have a great day, and we look forward to a good weekend.

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.