

Thursday December 10<sup>th</sup>, Thursday in the Second 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.

Another busy day, with a Thursday lunchtime Mass, followed by a Requiem Mass this afternoon.

Once again, Isaiah is trying to encourage the Jews. Isaiah 41:13-20 speaks of God taking them by the hand and making them strong. Their land will become very fertile and all will see the hand of God in their lives.

Up to now in our Gospels we have been concentrating on the prophet's anticipation of the saviour. In the Gospels for the next few days we work along with John, as he looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. In Matthew 11:11-15 Jesus mentions that John was to fulfil many of the prophecies we have heard over the past few weeks. *'If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen!'*

*Stir up our hearts, O Lord,  
to make ready the paths of your Only Begotten Son,  
that through his coming,  
we may be found worthy to serve you  
with minds made pure,  
and hearts filled with love.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

'On Jordan's Bank The Baptist's Cry' would seem a most appropriate hymn today.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zq0f0Qo6A24>

And today we turn to Wales for our Saint, Saint John Roberts, who was a priest and a martyr of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He was born in 1575 in Trawsfynydd in Gwynedd in North West Wales, and went to St. John's College in Oxford, before joining the Benedictine Order as a monk, completing his novitiate in Santiago de Compostella in Spain. The rest of his life was spent toing and froing between England France, where he was the first Prior of the famous Douai Abbey for English Benedictines, and later of Downside Abbey in Sussex. During the anti-catholic persecutions he was captured many times, and eventually, like other Saints we've been thinking of recently, he was hung, drawn and quartered at Tyburn on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1610.

*Preserve among your people, Lord, we pray,  
the faith which was handed down from your Apostles,*

*assured by the authority of the Holy See,  
and professed by the blood of St. John Roberts, you holy Martyr.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

I'm sure you have heard of Santiago de Compostella, not least because it is the concluding stop on the famous pilgrimage walk through Spain, the Camino. I've never actually done the walk, but my mate Fr. Ed in Lincoln has, so I'll let him tell you about it.

*'The Camino to Santiago di Compostella is an ancient pilgrimage route to the shrine of Saint James the Apostle in Santiago which is in north west Spain (the bit that sits over Portugal). To be recognised as an official Camino pilgrim one must walk the last 100km although as there is no official starting point many pilgrims walk much longer distances. For example many will start from the French side of the Pyrenees which means a distance of over 800km.*

*I was lucky enough to be able to do the Camino in July 2011 and I spent three weeks walking some 300km. It was an incredible experience and I met many interesting and fascinating people on the way. Some will walk as 'pilgrims' with a definite spiritual motivation whilst others will walk for historical and cultural reasons or simply as tourists. It makes little difference when you are on the road and everybody helps and encourages one another on the way.*

*The accommodation in the pilgrim hostels can be quite basic but provides the necessities at the end of a long days walking, a shower, a chance to wash clothes, and a bed on which to lay your sleeping bag. After the first couple of days I quickly forgot any sense of embarrassment about the shared dormitories.*

*I was able to time my arrival in Santiago for the Feast of St James on 25 July which made the final moments of the pilgrimage particularly special and I got to witness the famous 'bottofumero' or large thurible suspended and swinging from the Cathedral ceiling.'*

And a couple of pictures of Ed on his walk and his accommodation are attached. This is the rather lovely prayer which is said at the end of masses en route:

*O God, who brought your servant Abraham out of the land of the Chaldean's,  
protecting him in his wanderings, who guided the Hebrew people across the desert,  
we ask that you watch over us, your servants, as we walk in the love of your name  
to Santiago de Compostela.*

*Be for us our companion on the walk, Our guide at the crossroads,  
Our breath in our weariness, Our protection in danger,  
Our albergue on the Camino, Our shade in the heat,  
Our light in the darkness, Our consolation in our discouragements,  
And our strength in our intentions,  
So that with your guidance we may arrive safe and sound at the end of the road  
and enriched with grace and virtue we return safely to our homes filled with joy.*

*In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

*Apostle Santiago, pray for us. Santa Maria, pray for us.*

Cheers, Ed!

Please pray for the repose of the soul of David John Hoyle, whose requiem Mass I will be celebrating this afternoon. *May he rest in the peace of Christ.*

Enjoy your pilgrim walk through Thursday!

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.