

Friday December 11<sup>th</sup>, Friday 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.

Not to worry you, but two weeks today it is Christmas Day, so I hope all our preparations for Christmas are coming along, not least our preparation for our Christmas services, and booking in for our masses.

The Prophecy of Isaiah 48:17-19 is straight to the point this morning - and would be preached at the coming of Jesus by John the Baptist: *'I will teach you what is good for you - I will lead you in the way you must go. If only you had remained faithful you would be full of happiness.'*

Jesus references the people's reaction to John the Baptist, in Matthew 11:16-19 when he sees his generation as like children crying out in the playground, *'We played the pipes for you and you wouldn't dance; we sang dirges, and you wouldn't be mourners.'* If only they had not remained blind to the work of John, then they would have been able receive the message of Jesus more fully, and recognise who he was.

*Lord,  
open my spiritual eyes,  
to see everything you have done, and continue to do for me.  
Let me see the goodness that is in the world,  
and the good actions which continue to be made,  
even in these most difficult times.  
Help me not to be frustrated with what I don't have or can't do,  
but let me rejoice in what I have, and in what able to do by your grace.  
I thank you for my baptism, I thank you for my faith,  
and I thank you that you have opened my spiritual eyes to see you.  
Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

And let us sing 'Walk With Me, Oh My Lord' in quite a bouncy little version, with words:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qn199-QOr7M>

And our Saint today is Saint Damasus (not to be confused with St. John Damascene who we celebrated a short while ago). Damasus was born in the year 304AD, became a deacon, and at the age of 62 was chosen to be the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. His appointment was not without controversy,

as another group decided to elect a different pope, and this led to some violent clashes, which continued throughout his papacy. Damasus is perhaps best known for his love of Scripture. He commissioned Saint Jerome to translate the Scriptures from Hebrew and Greek into Latin, into what is known as the Vulgate version of the Bible. His own humility is shown in that a crypt was built for him in a cemetery with several martyrs, but he refused the offer of burial there, and on the crypt are the words, '*I, Damasus, wished to be buried here, but I feared to offend the ashes of these holy ones,*' and when he died in 384 he was buried with his mother and sister.

*Grant we pray, O Lord,  
that we constantly exalt the merits of your Martyrs,  
whom Pope Saint Damasus so venerated and loved,  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

These are some words of Damasus, reflecting on the many titles we bestow upon Jesus. It's almost like a litany, and quite beautiful:

*Lord, because He is Spirit; Word, because He is God; Son, because He is the only-begotten son of the Father; Man, because He was born of the Virgin; Priest, because He offered Himself as a sacrifice; Shepherd, because He is a guardian; Worm, because He rose again; Mountain, because He is strong; Way, because there is a straight path through Him to life; Lamb, because He suffered; Corner-Stone, because instruction is His; Teacher, because He demonstrates how to live; Sun, because He is the illuminator; Truth, because He is from the Father; Life, because He is the creator; Bread because He is flesh; Samaritan, because He is the merciful protector; Christ, because He is anointed; Jesus, because He is a mediator; Vine, because we are redeemed by His blood; Lion, because he is king; Rock, because He is firm; Flower, because He is the chosen one; Prophet, because He has revealed what is to come.*

Not only beautiful, but full of theology as well.

In other news, over in Australia my sister saw the attached picture on the side of the highway. Let's hope...!

Well it's been a busy week, so let's look forward to the weekend, and I look forward to seeing many of you at our masses next week.

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.