Monday September 14th, The Feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross

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.

It was lovely to see lots of faces at Mass over the weekend, and hopefully next weekend, I’ll be up for a little meeting and greeting!

Today we have the wonderful Feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross. First of all the Feast has some historical background. Firstly, it marks the original dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the relics of the Cross were kept, in 335AD. Secondly it commemorates the rescue of the relic of the True Cross by Emperor Heraclitus in 629AD after it had been captured by the Persians. But above all this is a Feast which quietly, simply, yet overwhelmingly, celebrates the Cross of Christ, the instrument of our salvation – in many ways being a little reminded of Good Friday six months or so after Easter. There have been many examples of the power of the Cross down through the ages. Many battles were won under its protection. It is most important for our spiritual battles with the powers of evil. The Cross is a great and powerful sign of God’s love for us – a love stronger than death – and also a daily reality in our lives, the true path to holiness, *‘Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”’ (Luke 9:23).*

Our first reading today, Numbers 21:4-9, is a scene from the Book of Numbers which prefigures the death of Jesus on the cross. Just as the Israelites were freed from the poison of the serpents by looking at the standard with the bronze serpent stuck on it, so would we be saved from the poison of evil by trusting in Jesus on the Cross.

Our second reading today, St. Paul to the Philippians 2:6-11, is one of the greatest and most moving passages in all St Paul's writings, and really incorporates the whole of Jesus’ role in the history of salvation in just a few lines. Jesus was by very nature, God; by right he was equal to God. Yet he emptied himself, he poured himself out completely in sacrifice for us. He took the form of a slave - he became one of us. He humbled himself, he became obedient to death even to death on a cross. As a result he has been given a name above all names. Jesus is Lord and everyone should bend their knees and proclaim the glory of God. Appropriately, this is always the second reading on Palm Sunday.

In the gospel, Jesus speaks of this scene to Nicodemus. It prefigures what is going to happen to him.

And for our Gospel today, John 3:13-17, we have Jesus speaking to the Pharisees Nicodemus. It speaks of the forthcoming crucifixion with reference to today’s first reading:

 *‘…the son of Man must be lifted p*

 *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,*

 *so that everyone who believes, may have eternal life in him.’*

And so it is today that we look up at the figure of Jesus on the cross, and acknowledging the salvation he won for us in his death and resurrection.

 *Let us pray.*

 *God our heavenly Father,*

 *you placed the salvation of the human race*

 *on the wood of the Cross,*

 *so that, where death arose,*

 *light might again spring forth,*

 *and the evil one, who conquered on a tree,*

 *might likewise on a tree be conquered.*

 *God, who willed that your Only begotten Son,*

 *should undergo the Cross to save the human race,*

 *grant, we pray, that we who have known his mystery on earth*

 *may merit the grace of his redemption in heaven.*

 *For you placed the salvation of the human race*

By far the most appropriate hymn for today is ‘Lift High The Cross’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbcBXYP4AlE> but in case you are not too familiar with it, let us add my favourite Good Friday Hymn <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fnhiQnwI_M>

Today is the day to say a prayer before the Crucifix, and I urge you, if you don’t have one, to get one for your house. There are so many beautiful crucifixes (which I’ve mentioned before in another message), but there are also many children’s crucifixes, especially appropriate for baptism or any sacrament celebration present. Here is the ‘Prayer Before A Crucifix’.

 *Look down upon me, good and gentle Jesus*

 *while before Your face I humbly kneel and,*

 *with burning soul, pray and beseech You*

 *to fix deep in my heart lively sentiments*

 *of faith, hope, and charity;*

 *true contrition for my sins,*

 *and a firm purpose of amendment.*

 *While I contemplate, with great love and tender pity,*

 *Your five most precious wounds, pondering over them within me*

 *and calling to mind the words which David, Your prophet, said to You, my Jesus:*

 *‘They have pierced My hands and My feet,*

 *they have numbered all My bones.’*

 *Amen.*

And from the sublime to the ridiculous! Eileen completed her Sound of Music walk around the Parish yesterday. She was joined by the Archbishop of Salzburg, and several other well-wishers at the top of Red Bank Road! Well done Fraulein Eileen, and thanks in anticipation for any sponsorship for her wacky endeavour! There will be one of two more great photos to come throughout the week.

Medical wise, I am still plodding on, quite tired after doing stuff, and the appetite could be better, but certainly most signs of nasty infection seem to well on their way away. Cheers for your support and prayers.

Finally, please pray for the repose of the soul of Maura O’Rooney, whose funeral I will be celebrating later today at Carleton. *May she rest in the peace and love of Christ.*

Mass Saturday evening was recorded – there was no hymn I’m afraid, as I just about croaked it through Mass. Mass is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KH3x3IgiQuo&feature=youtu.be>

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.