

Saturday November 14th, Saturday in the Thirty-Second 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.

And welcome to the weekend!

Today have the last extract from the New Testament letters for the moment, before the strange and beautiful readings from the book of the Apocalypse which take us through our last two weeks of the Church's year. Today's extract is taken from the very short third letter of John. This was written to Gaius, a Christian in the church of Asia Minor. In 3 John 5-6 he praises his faith and charity, commending him for his faithful work.

Our Gospel, Luke 18: 1-8, is the parable of the Judge who is persistently disturbed by an old lady, and eventually grants her wishes. The parable is a call to be persistent in prayer, and our heavenly Father will grant what we ask. 'But,' says Jesus, '*when the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?*'

Lord, I bow my heart before You and give You honour and praise.

Oh God, strengthen my prayer life.

Help me to pray more.

Nudge me to pray when I'm doing mindless tasks.

Help me to truly know who I am in Christ,

to understand that You always hear me,

to know Your Word so I can pray it,

to write down my own prayer needs and the needs of others,

and to know that You really do know all my needs before I ask them.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

As Wales is now out of its strict lockdown let's sing our favourite welsh hymn, 'Guide Me O Thy Great Redeemer.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkVT8O5E1rM>

November is of course the month of the Holy Souls, when we think of all those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. I know that over the month many of you will be visiting the various cemeteries to pay respect to your loved ones, and over in Hong Kong, my brother Martin, his wife Liza, and daughter Sarah have been doing something similar, a couple of weeks ago, with the Taoist Festival of Cheung Yeung. I'll let him tell you about it:

'Cheung Yeung Festival (or "Double Nine" as it's on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month) has its origins in the defeat of a plague-carrying demon by Heng Jing, who had been given military training and a demon-killing sword.

It's one of two festivals each year when we visit ancestral graves and update them on events that have been going on. We bring offerings of food, incense, and paper presents such as clothes, cars, and cell phones, which are made in specialist shops. These are burned near the graves, which are usually out on hillsides to give good Feng Sui. So it's a nice day out. Unfortunately, this is a very dry time of year and so there are a lot of hill fires started by people being careless with burning offerings. It's a busy day for the fire services, and we've had water-bombing choppers going over all day today.

We go to a Buddhist convent in the North West New Territories where Liza's mother and grandma are buried in the hills just above it. Sarah, being a vegan, is a favourite of the strictly vegetarian nuns who keep up the areas around the graves and provide shrines in the convent for the people buried there. The food taken for offerings is eaten in a picnic, or you can have lunch prepared by the nuns.'

And he attaches a few photographs of where they have been. Quite fascinating. Several years ago I was there for the feast, and it is a beautiful journey and quite an emotional day.

*Save your servant, O Sustainer of Life,
From too early a death.
Make my heart like the green willow tree
That easily bends in the wind,
That bows gracefully before the storm
Only to raise its head again with renewed life
When the angry clouds have moved on.
Fill me this day, I pray,
With the strength of your Spirit,
The strength to be flexible and ever-green.
Create within me a heart that is gentle and meek.
The hard and strong will fall;
The soft and meek shall overcome.*

Tonight's mass is our annual bereavement mass, when I will be reading out the names of people who have died since our mass last year. Sadly we are of course unable to invite families as we usual do, but families have all been notified about the mass and how to access it on the YouTube.

I hope you are having the best of all possible weekends, as Voltaire would say!

Tonight's mass will be recorded and available on the YouTube tomorrow morning. Texts for Mass each day can be found at <http://www.universalis.com/>

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.