

Monday November 16th, Monday in the Thirty-Third 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.

Welcome to the start of another week in lockdown. Hopefully we are now half-way through and can look forward to an open and free December and Advent season.

For the last two weeks of the Church's liturgical year we read from the Book of Revelation. This was written during the persecution of the Christians, who at the time were expected to treat the Emperor publicly as a god. It uses a style found in the Old Testament - apocalyptic writing. This described the chaos of the present, referred to terrible calamities falling on the people, but declared that eventually there would be peace in the Day of the Lord. In the New Testament, the Day of the Lord refers to the day of Jesus Christ. After the calamities and tragedies there will be great peace. In this first extract, Revelations 1:1-4. 2:1-5, we are told that this is God's revelation to humanity - a revelation of truth. This revelation is given through Christ to John, who is God's slave and servant. This itself is a great honour. The first 'letter' is to the Church of Ephesus. It was one of the great cities, but notorious for its pagan superstition. John praises those who were strong in upholding the Christian principles.

In Luke 18:35-43 we have the beautiful story of the blind man being cured near Jericho, the very ancient city. The people scold the blind man for calling out to Jesus, but the man's prayer is immediately answered; *'Receive your sight. Your faith has saved you.'* As is often the case with such miracles, the blind man had more insight into the person of Jesus than those around him.

Heavenly Father,

I pray for spiritual sight.

I confess that it is natural for me to do things my way.

I recognize that I am limited, but that you know all things.

I yield my spiritual eyesight to you so that my spiritual vision will be clear.

You son Jesus Christ came to give sight to the blind and to open our eyes.

I commit my ways to you so that I can see your ways and not my own.

Through the same, Christ our Lord.

Amen.

So, 'open your eyes, look into the sky' as we sing 'Colours of Day.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4kFVUfM3PA>

And today we celebrate quite a remarkable woman, Saint Margaret of Scotland. Margaret was born in 1046, the granddaughter of King Edmund, whilst her family was in exile in Hungary. Margaret and her family returned to England when she was 10-years-old. When her father died her widowed mother set out to take her children north to Northumbria, fleeing from William the Conqueror. Tradition says, Agatha decided to leave Northumbria and return to the continent, but her family's ship got caught in a storm. The storm drove their ship even more north to Scotland, where they were shipwrecked in 1068. The spot they landed on is now known as 'St. Margaret's Hope.' The King of Scotland, Malcolm III, welcomed Margaret and her family, and he soon fell in love with her and they were married in 1070, and together they had eight children. Margaret's kind-nature and good heart was a strong influence on Malcolm's reign helping him become a virtuous King of Scotland. Margaret constantly worked to help the poor, encouraging people to serve those in need around them, and promoted arts and education. In 1093, Malcolm and their oldest son were killed during the Battle of Alnwick. Already ill and worn from a life full of austerity and fasting, Margaret died four days after her husband, on November 16, 1093. She was canonized by Pope Innocent IV in 1250 for her life of holiness and virtue. She is the secondary Patron of Scotland, and is sometimes referred to as 'The Pearl of Scotland.'

*O God, who made Saint Margaret of Scotland wonderful
in her outstanding charity towards the poor,
grant that through her intercession and example
we may reflect among all humanity
the image of your divine goodness.
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

And while we are on the subject of Scotland, here I am in Edinburgh a couple of years ago, in a pub on the Royal Mile, about to embark on some delicious haggis, the Scottish delicacy of sheep's heart, liver, and lungs, minced with onion, oatmeal, suet, spices, and salt, and traditionally cooked in a sheep's stomach, served with neaps and tatties, and whisky sauce. It's not everybody's cup of tea, and some people don't have the stomach for it (groan). It was absolutely delicious! I did look for jokes about haggis, but quite frankly, they were offal (groan 2), so instead here is the final stanza of a traditional Scottish poem dedicated to the haggis (John Barleycorn is apparently the personification of wheat crops in folk poetry):

*'Ye Pow'rs wha gie us a' that's gude
Still bless auld Caledonia's brood,
Wi' great John Barleycorn's heart's bluid
In stoups or luggies;
And on our boards, that king o' food,
A gud Scotch Haggis!'*

Have a lovely Monday, and Sainsbury's do an excellent haggis if you really want to celebrate the Feast of Margaret of Scotland. 'Slàinte mhath!' (which is 'Good health' in Scottish Gaelic).

Sunday's Bereavement Mass was recorded and is available on the YouTube at <https://youtu.be/vz7JvyVr6mQ> 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.