

Wednesday December 16th, Wednesday in the Third Week in 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.

Bit of a stormy morning to wake up to! Eek!

For this last day of the first part of Advent we are back to Isaiah. In Isaiah 45:6-8, 21-26 we are given a great poetic document. It was written to give consolation to the downtrodden Israelites. The good God will bring salvation to his people. He is a God of integrity and a saviour. *'Send victory like a dew, you heavens, and let the clouds rain it down. Let the earth open for salvation to spring up. Victorious and glorious through the Lord shall be all the descendants of Israel.'*

John the Baptist is again the topic of our Gospel. In Luke 7:19-23 to strengthen their faith, and very possibly to strengthen his own, he gets his disciples to meet Jesus and ask him 'are you the one to come or must we wait for someone else.' Jesus answers by showing how he is fulfilling what the scriptures said of the saviour - curing the blind, the lame, the lepers, raising the dead to life, and proclaiming the Good News. *'And happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.'*

O Lord, Father Almighty,

I pray for help to strengthen my faith in you.

I believe, but I don't always believe in your power and might.

I don't always believe that in you all things are possible.

I don't always place my trust in you, instead trying to fix everything on my own.

I don't always turn to you first, instead turning to the world for answers and help.

I have doubts about your role in the world today.

I struggle to relate the scriptures to my own life.

Lord, I believe, but help with my unbelief!

Help my head and my heart and my soul to believe in you

and trust in you fully, without a doubt,

knowing that in you all things are possible.

Lord, strengthen my faith! Amen.

Well I hope all your Christmas preparations are going well. Yesterday afternoon in Church we put up the crib and the Christmas Tree which has brought some much needed colour and cheer into all our proceedings. As suggested by the Bishop we may keep them up right through January till February

2nd, the Feast of the Presentation, which really concludes Christmastide. We also recorded an Advent Bereavement Service for Hollowells, and it was lovely to hear some Christmas Carols throughout the service. It's sad that this weekend would have been our Carol Service which always seems to mark the start of Christmas, with the choir always sounding wonderful, and Stephen making the Organ sound like a full orchestra! Can I suggest everyone has an Irish Coffee on Sunday afternoon as we would have done normally? As the tree is now up in Church for the children's video I did a blessing of the tree, which you might like to pray yourselves around your own trees at home:

The Christmas tree is a blessing to our homes. It reminds us of all that is beautiful, all that is filled with the gentleness and the promise of God. It stands in our midst as a tree of light, that we might promise such beauty to one another and to our world. It stands like that tree of paradise that God made into the tree of life, the cross of Jesus.

Lord our God,

we praise you for the light of creation:

the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night.

We praise you for the light of Israel:

the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom

of the Scriptures. the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

We praise you for Jesus Christ, your Son:

he is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace,

who fills us with the wonder of your love.

Lord God, let your blessing come upon us

as we illumine this tree.

May the light and cheer it gives

be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts.

May all who delight in this tree

come to the knowledge and joy of salvation.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

And congratulations to my mate, Father Kevan Dorgan, parish priest of Ambleside and Windermere, although shortly to be moving to West Cumbria, who today celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of his Ordination to the Priesthood. Sadly due to restrictions he won't be able to have anything like the incredible celebration you gave me last year, but hopefully we can make his twenty-sixth anniversary a good do! Well done, Kev! And here's the two of us in Rome last October. A great week!

However the weather goes for the rest of the day, do have a good one.

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.