

Saturday October 17th, Saturday In The Twenty-Eighth 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.

So we are in Tier 3, as expected really. The Church will remain open for services, but we have to follow more guidelines. I'll explain them at our masses this week, but masks must be worn from entering the Church premises, i.e. when you come through the gates, until you leave through the gates or the car park, and there can be no chatting outside nor inside the Church at all, as this constitutes a 'meet'. Please observe strict social distancing in and around the Church grounds, and follow the instructions from the stewards. Only if we are strict about all this will our Churches be allowed to remain open. Hey ho. Let's all stay safe and sensible, and keep our Churches open.

Today's extract from St. Paul writing to the Ephesians is a tremendous one, full of power and inspiration and promise. In Ephesians 1:15-23 he prays that God will give us a spirit of wisdom and good common sense and may enlighten our minds so that we can see what hope his call holds for us. We can see that he raised Christ from the dead to sit on his right hand in heaven: he has made him the head of the Church, which is the body of Christ. We are inspired to shout out the words of the Psalm 8 which follows it:

*Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

*You have set your glory in the heavens.*

*Through the praise of children and infants*

*you have established a stronghold against your enemies,*

*to silence the foe and the avenger.*

*When I consider your heavens,*

*the work of your fingers,*

*the moon and the stars,*

*which you have set in place,*

*what is mankind that you are mindful of them,*

*human beings that you care for them?*

*You have made them a little lower than the angels*

*and crowned them with glory and honour.*

*Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

How about a rousing chorus of 'Majesty, Worship His Majesty!'?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaRwD2Y7C0s>

In Luke 12:8-12 Jesus makes his solemn promise - anyone who declares himself openly for him, he will declare him in the presence of God. Jesus now tells us that any guidance we need will be given to us by the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus will send. This is one of the first prophecies of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Let's invoke the Holy Spirit on the earth in these present times:

*Come Holy Spirit,  
fill the hearts of your faithful  
and kindle in them the fire of your love.  
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.  
And You shall renew the face of the earth.*

And today is the memorial of St. Ignatius of Antioch. Ignatius was surnamed Theophorus, God-bearer. It seems that he took charge of the Church in Antioch in 69AD. Some years later, during the persecution of Trajan, he was arrested and brought to Rome. That was a long journey and he visited many Christian communities on the way and wrote many letters to other communities, which give a really good clear report of Christian belief and practices a century or so after the birth of Christ. He was martyred in 107 – legend tells us that he was eaten by two lions in the Roman amphitheatre during the Emperor's public games.

*Almighty ever living God,  
who adorn the sacred body of your Church  
with the confession of holy martyrs,  
grant, we pray, that just as the glorious passion of St. Ignatius of Antioch,  
which we celebrate today,  
brought him eternal splendour,  
so it may be for us unending protection.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

I'm guessing it is fairly unlikely that any of us will have to survive a lion attack - although quite frankly these days *anything* is possible - but if you are ever attacked by a lion, apparently you should not run off, although you may back away slowly, but stare him in the eye, whilst flapping your hands around in the air to make yourself look bigger. A shame nobody told Ignatius - or Albert for that matter.

Do you have time for a terrible joke? A Christian priest in Africa being chased by a lion is running for his life. While he is running full speed, thinking how to get away from this situation, he starts praying asking God to please turn the lion into a good Christian. He hears a voice from the sky that says: 'Your prayer has been answered.' Suddenly the lion catches up to him and jumps him, trapping him,

And miraculously the lion stops, puts his two front paws together and starts praying: 'Bless us O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty...' Told you it was terrible.

And here is me and Tobias re-enacting one of the Presbytery Cat's favourite scenes from one of his favourite movies, 'The Lion King'. Altogether now, 'It's the Circle, the Circle of life...'

I think I'm going a little CoronaCrazy today. Hakuna Matata!

Tomorrow morning's mass will be recorded and available on the tube from the link I'll put on tomorrow's Message. Texts for each day can be found at <http://universalis.com/mass.htm> The Newsletter and bidding prayers are hopefully attached.

Have a good day, in these restricted, and somewhat chilly, times.

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.