

Friday December 18th, Friday 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.

Once again it is a bit damp out there, but let's not let the weather dampen our joyful adventide, as we draw towards our Christmas celebrations.

The days are coming, the prophet Jeremiah says, when the Lord will raise a virtuous branch for David and he will save Judah, and the exiled people will once again live in their own land. In Jeremiah 23:5-8 we have the famous beautiful phrase *'In his days justice shall flourish and peace till the moon fails.'*

Reading Matthew 1:18-24 we see the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah. Joseph is told about the conception of Mary's child, and that he is to name him Jesus. Whilst Joseph needs to be told the truth about Mary's son by an angel in a dream, he still must have had to the most enormous faith to take on the huge role that God was asking. As guardian of Jesus, let us ask St. Joseph to be our guardian in these pandemic times:

*To you, O blessed Joseph, do we come in our tribulation,
and having implored the help of your most holy Spouse,
we confidently invoke your patronage also.
Through that charity which bound you
to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God
and through the paternal love with which you embraced the Child Jesus,
we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance
which Jesus Christ has purchased by his Blood,
and with your power and strength to aid us in our necessities.
O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family,
defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ;
O most loving father, ward off from us
every contagion of error and corrupting influence;
As once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly peril,
so now protect God's Holy Church
from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity;
shield, too, each one of us by your constant protection,
so that, supported by your example and your aid,*

*we may be able to live piously, to die in holiness,
and to obtain eternal happiness in heaven. Amen.*

And our beautiful 'O' Antiphon: *'O Adonai and leader of the house of Israel, you appeared to Moses in a burning bush and you gave him the Law on Sinai. O come and save us with your mighty power.'*

For a hymn today let us 'Sing Of Mary, Pure And Lowly In the House Of Nazareth,' as Joseph was definitely there in the house too. I always think this song should have a verse about Joseph – maybe one day I'll get around to having a crack at writing one.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ap6Hym_ERQM

And so it is the last day at school here at St. Bernadette's. It's been quite a term as our amazing young people and staff have had to come to terms with a completely new way of working in school, with staggered entry and exit times, lots of washing of hands, working and playing in their class bubbles. and even acting and videoing the school nativity separately. We should say a big well done to them all, for their hard work and ingenuity, and hope they all have a well deserved rest and great time over the Christmas holiday. We had great fun recording the school Nativity class by class and if you go on to the school website you can watch it there, as well as taking a virtual tour around the school. Amazing thanks to Mrs. Satterthwaite and the whole team for everything they do for us and our parish and wider community, and let's keep them all in our prayers.

Almighty God,

We come to you today and give thanks for all our teachers.

Thank you for the way in which they give of themselves each day in the classroom,

Serving and instructing the next generation of this land.

We thank you for them all now.

Father, please fill their hearts with courage now by your mighty Spirit.

Fill them with your strength, so they may rise to every challenge and not grow weary.

*Fill them with your wisdom, so that they may be able to make good judgement
when guiding and helping others.*

*Fill them with your peace, so that when stress and anxiety comes
it would not overwhelm them.*

*Fill them with your joy, so that the passion they have for their subject
may become a passion that they share with our children.*

We ask all this in the wonderful name of Jesus. Amen.

Check them all out, including the Nativity, at <https://www.st-bernadette.blackpool.sch.uk/>

In other news, over in Hong Kong the family have been Christmas Shopping, and whilst there might not be a lot of fir trees to be decorated for Christmas, in one shopping centre they've gone all out with a Christmas Pagoda – with a star on top! Very inventive.

Hope you have a happy day. Don't forget we are still taking bookings for 12noon and 8pm Mass on Christmas Eve, and 10am Mass on Christmas day. Cheers!

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.