

Friday January 1st, The Eighth Day of the Octave of Christmas, Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

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 let me begin by praying that each and every one of us has a happy, peaceful, healthy and safe New Year.

*Our lives are made of days and nights, of seasons and years,
for we are part of a universe of suns and moons and planets.
We mark ends and we make beginnings and, in all,
we praise God for the grace and mercy that fill our days.*

And we begin the New Year with the Feast of Mary, Mother of God, putting 2021 under her patronage. *'This celebration, assigned to January 1 in conformity with the ancient liturgy of the city of Rome, is meant to commemorate the part played by Mary in this mystery of salvation. It is meant also to exalt the singular dignity which this mystery brings to the holy Mother ... through whom we were found worthy ... to receive the Author of life.'* It is likewise a fitting occasion for renewed adoration of the newborn Prince of Peace, for listening once more to the glad tidings of angels, and for imploring from God, through the Queen of Peace, the supreme gift of peace.' (Marialis cultus - 1974).

And for this Feast we are given three lovely readings. The first is from the Book of Numbers 6:22-27 The Lord gave Moses a special blessing, which is given even greater credence with the presence of Christ. *'May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you; may the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace.'* The second reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 4:4-7. God sent his Son, born of Mary, to enable us to become God's adopted children. We are no longer slaves, but have the same intimacy as a child with loving parents. We can actually say 'Abba, Father' to God, *'and if God has made you his son, then he has made you his heir.'* What an honour!

And in the Gospel, Luke 2:16-21, we hear that as the Shepherds leave the Holy Family, having told them their story, Mary, *'treasure all these things and pondered them in her heart.'* These are the words of Pope Saint John Paul II on this Gospel:

'The Octave of Christmas ends on the first day of the New Year, which is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, venerated as the Mother of God. The Gospel reminds us that she "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart."' So she did in Bethlehem, on Golgotha at the foot of the cross,

and on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended in the Upper Room. And so she does today too. The Mother of God and of human beings keeps in her heart all of humanity's problems, great and difficult, and meditates upon them. The Alma Redemptoris Mater walks with us and guides us with motherly tenderness towards the future. Thus she helps humanity cross all the "thresholds" of the years, the centuries, the millenniums, by sustaining their hope in the One who is Lord of history.'

For a Christmas Carol today, let us sing 'See Amid The Winter's Snow' with its final verse:

*Virgin mother, Mary, blest,
by the joys that fill thy breast,
pray for us, that we may prove,
worthy of the Saviour's love.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xgyfXP96mA>

And let us pray for this New Year;

*May God make our year a happy one!
Not by shielding us from all sorrows and pain,
But by strengthening us to bear it, as it comes;
Not by making our path easy,
But by making us sturdy to travel any path;
Not by taking hardships from us,
But by taking fear from our heart;
Not by granting us unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping our face bright, even in the shadows;
Not by making our life always pleasant,
But by showing us when people and their causes need us most,
and by making us anxious to be there to help.
God's love, peace, hope and joy to us for the year ahead.*

I made a New Year's resolution to stop procrastinating. I'll start tomorrow. First bad joke of the new Year!

I attach a picture of the little crib we have in the Church Porch. The figures belonged to the late Pat and Karen Gregory, bless them, and the wooden crib was a lovely donation from a Parishioner. God Bless.

Have a great day, and let us all have a great year.

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.