

Saturday January 2nd, Second Saturday after Christmas

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 what a beautiful day it is!

Here we are on the second day of our New Year: *'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.'* (2 Corinthians 5:17) It was lovely to see so many people at Mass on New Year's Day, as well as people joining us online, and I look forward to seeing you throughout this coming week.

We continue with our reading of the First Letter of St. John. In I Jn 2:22-28 we are reminded that to acknowledge the Son is to acknowledge the Father as well - to deny Christ is to deny the Father. Keep alive in you what you have been taught and you will live in the Son and in the Father - you will possess eternal life, *'the anointing he gave teaches you everything.'*

In our Gospel, John 1:19-28 we start preparing for our celebration of the Epiphany when the world by the light of the star and the presence of the Wise Men was invited to celebrate the birth of Christ, with John the Baptist reminds his listeners that he was not the Christ, but came to prepare the way for him - the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Lord,

on this new day, in a new year,

help there to be peace in our lives and peace in our churches,

and peace in our world.

Where we have sinned, move us to repentance,

and help us confess to those we have grieved and seek their forgiveness;

and where others have sinned against us

help us to trust in your vindication

and grant that those who have hurt us

might see your light and be made new in Christ.

We ask all these things in the name of the one John pointed to,

Christ Jesus, your living Word. Amen.

For our Christmas Carol today, let's sing the beautiful 'In The Bleak Midwinter'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hs9-Sxf9j4>

And today we are celebrating two Saints: Saint Basil the Great, and Saint Gregory Nazianen, two Bishops and Doctors of the Church. Basil was born of a Christian family at Caesarea in Cappadocia in the year 330AD. Outstanding in learning and virtue he was all set to retire and lead a quiet life when in 370AD he was appointed Bishop of Caesarea. He combatted the heresy of Arianism, which suggested that God the Son was not begotten by the Father but created by him, and therefore not co-eternal with him. He also wrote a rule for monks, which is still very much used by the eastern Churches. He was also known as a great servant of the poor, and died on January 1st in 379AD.

Gregory was born near Nazianus in the same year, 330AD. He did a lot of travelling, always craving to learn as much as he could. Like his friend St. Basil he too was hoping for a quiet, solitary life, but was ordained priest and in 381 was chosen as Bishop of Constantinople. Things were very difficult in his Diocese, with lots of internal squabbling, and suffering from ill health he returned to Nazianus where he died on January 25th in 389. He was nicknamed 'The Theologian' due to his great knowledge and eloquence.

*O God,
who were pleased to give light to your Church,
by the example and teaching
of the Bishops Saint Basil and Saint Gregory,
grant, we pray,
that in humility we may learn your truth
and practice it faithful in charity.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

So both Gregory and Basil were hoping for the quiet life, but got caught up in their service of the Lord. There are so many things other than serving the Lord that prevent us having a quiet life. If we feel rushed and caught up in the events surrounding us, here is a prayer for peace:

Almighty God, We bless you for our lives, we give you praise for your abundant mercy and grace we receive. We thank you for your faithfulness even though we are not that faithful to you. Lord Jesus, we ask you to give us all around peace in our mind, body, soul, and spirit. We want you to heal and remove everything that is causing stress, grief, and sorrow in our lives. Please guide our path through life and make our enemies be at peace with us. Let your peace reign in our family, at our place of work, businesses and everything we lay our hands on. Let your angels of peace go ahead of us when we go out and stay by our side when we return. Amen.

Don't forget that as well as our usual masses, the Church is open for private prayer and exposition on Sunday from noon till 1pm. I'll be in the sacristy throughout the hour if you need me.

Grab a little time for peace with the Lord, and enjoy this day. And perhaps a slice of emoji cake, which they are enjoying in Hong Kong!

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.