

Monday January 4th, Second Monday in Christmastide.

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 we wake up to a cold and frosty morning! Be careful of the ice out there!

Continuing with the beautiful First Letter of St. John, we are warned that we should not let anyone lead you astray; to live a holy life is to be holy just as God is holy. As 1 John 3:7-10 tells us '*Anyone not loving his brother is no child of God's.*'

In the Gospel of John 1:35-42 some of John the Baptist's disciples join Jesus. One of these was Andrew, who then went on to introduce his brother Simon to him, '*We have found the Messiah.*'. '*Jesus looked hard at him and said, "You are Simon son of John, you are to be called Cephas," meaning Rock.*' Let us pray Psalm 144:

*Praise be to the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle.*

*He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer...*

*Reach down Your hand from on high;*

*deliver me and rescue me*

*from the mighty waters, from the hands of enemies*

*whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful.*

*I will sing a new song to You, O God;*

*on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to You,*

*to the One who gives victory to kings,*

*who delivers His servant David from the deadly sword.*

And for our Christmas carol today, let's sing the 'On Christmas night All Christians Sing', especially as we were not allowed to sing on Christmas night in Church!

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

And today we remember St. Elizabeth Seton. Elizabeth was born in New York of a very distinguished Episcopalian family in 1774. She had three daughters and two sons, but her husband died while the family were in Italy in 1803. During her stay there after his death she became interested in Catholicism and was eventually received into the Church in 1805. As a result she was estranged from her family. She spent her years establishing a school for girls in Baltimore, Maryland, and setting up groups of women to look after the poor. Out of this came the Congregation of the Daughters of

Charity of St Joseph which grew rapidly throughout the States. The Congregation was very influential in building up the parochial school system. Elizabeth died in 1821 and was the first native-born North American to be canonised, in 1975.

*Lord God,  
You blessed Elizabeth Seton with gifts of grace;  
As wife and mother, educator and foundress,  
So that she might spend her life in service to your people.  
Through her example and prayers  
May we learn to express our love for you  
In love for our fellow men and women.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

And whilst we are in America, this is the official American Jesuit Coronavirus prayer. Rather beautiful.

*Jesus Christ, you travelled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.*

*Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care.*

*Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbours from helping one another.*

*Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders.*

*Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.*

*Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace.*

*Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know your peace.*

*Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know your protection and peace.*

*Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth.*

*Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace.*

*Jesus Christ, heal us.*

And amen to that.

Well, the three Kings brought their gifts to Jesus, and only yesterday did my gifts to my family in Australia arrive! Better late than never I guess!

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Maria Hapgood, whose funeral I will be celebrating at Carleton this afternoon. *May she rest in the peace and love of Christ.*

Have a lovely start to the week.

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.