

Wednesday January 6th, Second Wednesday 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.

Lovely start to the day, but very busy, including a trip to Manchester for a burial, so let's crack on!

Having celebrated the Epiphany on Sunday we have other readings for the 6th of January today. Continuing the First Letter of St. John we are giving some theological teaching about Witness. I John 5:5-13 tells us that the Spirit, the water and the blood are the three witnesses to the work of Christ. We accept God's testimony, given as evidence for his Son. God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son.

We have the story referred to earlier in the week - the baptism of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of St. Mark 1:7-11. The Holy Spirit descends on him like a dove and a voice from heaven said, 'You are my son, the beloved; my favour rests on you.' The baptism of Jesus is not a washing away of the past, but rather a putting on of the new, preparing himself for the great task, setting out his style of ministry, being at one with the people. We will celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on Sunday.

Jesus, I thank You that You desire to speak to me every day - guiding me in spirit and in truth to obey Your Word and enjoy an abundant life.

I thank You that You have called me Your friend and that I may come boldly to the throne of grace to find help whenever I have a need in my life.

I draw near to You today. I seek Your face, Your truth and Your word for my life. I want to know You more, hear You more and obey You more.

Your Word says Your sheep know Your voice and we will not follow the voice of a stranger. Help me to know Your voice and not be deceived by any other voice.

As I seek to hear You today for instruction, correction and guidance, help me to confirm Your voice through Your Word.

I praise You and thank You. Amen.

For our Christmas Carol today let's sing 'The First Nowell' which celebrates both the Shepherds and the Kings.

Although we are celebrating the Epiphany all week, today is the actual day, and it might be nice to have a little think about the gifts that the Magi brought the Christ child, what they represented and how appropriate they were.

It is easy to see why gold is an appropriate gift for Jesus Christ. Gold is the metal of kings. When gold was presented to Jesus, it acknowledged his right to rule. The wise men knew Jesus was the King of kings. When gold was presented to Jesus, it acknowledged his right to rule.

Incense was also a significant gift. It was used in the temple worship. It was mixed with the oil that was used to anoint the priests of Israel. It was part of the meal offerings that were offerings of thanksgiving and praise to God. In presenting this gift the wise men pointed to Christ as our great High Priest, the one whose whole life was acceptable and well pleasing to his Father.

Myrrh was used for embalming. By any human measure it would be odd, if not offensive, to present to the infant Christ a spice used for embalming. But it was not offensive in this case, nor was it odd. It was a gift of faith. We do not know precisely what the wise men may have known or guessed about Christ's ministry, but we do know that the Old Testament again and again foretold his suffering, and can presume that these wise men, whatever their faith, would have some knowledge of the Original Testament.

Having ourselves been given the greatest gift of the presence of Christ, let us pray:

Lord,

We thank you for all the gifts you have given us;

All the gifts we have received from others.

Help us be good stewards of all entrusted to us

That we may become new gifts of love and hope

To all who need us.

Amen.

And here's a picture of our three kings, somewhat battered and bruised on their journey...!

Please pray for the repose of the souls of May Kidd and James Tony Smith whose funerals I will be celebrating today, also remembering Peter Brennan who will be received into Church this evening.
May their souls rest in the peace of Christ.

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.