

Friday January 15th, Friday of Week 1 in Ordinary Time Year 1.

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 a beautiful start to the morning, but it's jolly cold and frosty, so take care on the icy pavements if you decide to step out. Early start to the morning as the Army arrived at 7:30am to start covid testing everyone involved in school, and to begin the weekly testing of all staff, including myself. I'm due in at 10am, so I'll crack on.

If you don't harden your hearts you will definitely enter into the place of rest with the peace of God, the real promised land, is the promise made to us today in Hebrews 4:1-5. We must make sure that the word that is given to us is woven into the very fibre of our being through faith; *'We must therefore do everything we can to reach this place of rest.'*

Our Gospel today, Mark 2:1-12 is, for me, *the* classic healing miracle, combining so clearly Jesus's messages of the need for faith for a miracle to be performed and then recognized as such, and the need for spiritual healing to. Jesus was not interested in merely healing the sick. Here the faith of the paralytics friends, who let him down through the rood to get to Jesus is clearly demonstrated by their actions. Jesus immediately frees the man, not from his disability, but of his sins – shocking some of the crowd who do not recognise Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus, to prove he has the ability to forgive sins, only then frees the man of his illness, with everyone being astounded, *'We have never seen anything like this.'*

*Gracious and Holy Father,
give us the wisdom to discover You,
the intelligence to understand You,
the diligence to seek after You,
the patience to wait for You,
eyes to behold You,
a heart to meditate upon You,
and a life to proclaim You,
through the power of the Spirit of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

And today we remember a third-century saint, Paul the Hermit. Paul was reportedly born in Egypt, where he was orphaned by age 15. He was also a learned and devout young man. During the

persecution of Decius in Egypt in the year 250, Paul was forced to hide in the home of a friend. Fearing a brother-in-law would betray him, he fled in a cave in the desert. His plan was to return once the persecution ended, but the sweetness of solitude and heavenly contemplation convinced him to stay. He went on to live in that cave for the next 90 years. A nearby spring gave him drink, a palm tree furnished him clothing and nourishment. After 21 years of solitude, a bird began bringing him half of a loaf of bread each day. Without knowing what was happening in the world, Paul prayed that the world would become a better place. Saint Anthony of Egypt attests to his holy life and death. Tempted by the thought that no one had served God in the wilderness longer than he, Anthony was led by God to find Paul and acknowledge him as a man more perfect than himself. The raven that day brought a whole loaf of bread instead of the usual half. As Paul predicted, Anthony would return to bury his new friend. Thought to have been about 112 when he died, Paul is known as the First Hermit

Let us pray:

O God, you called Saint Paul the Hermit

to renounce the honours of this world

by fleeing into the desert

there to spend the rest of his life in contemplation on your holy name.

Through his intercession, may we despise all earthly desires,

and seek solitude and peace to hear you alone,

and seek love eternal.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,

your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

News from the Vatican: *‘Pope Francis has confirmed that he will get vaccinated against the coronavirus as early as next week and called opposition to the jab “suicidal denial.” He urged people to get the injection in an interview with an Italian broadcaster on Saturday. “There is a suicidal denial which I cannot explain, but today we have to get vaccinated,” the Pope told TV station Canale 5. “I believe that ethically everyone should take the vaccine,” he said in excerpts released ahead of Sunday’s broadcast. “It is an ethical choice because you are gambling with your health, with your life, but you are also gambling with the lives of others.” The 84-year-old pontiff has part of one lung missing, which makes him vulnerable to the virus. The Vatican had earlier announced that it is “morally acceptable” for the Church’s faithful to receive the coronavirus vaccine.’*

Judging by the attached photo I think I am definitely in need of holiday, and definitely in need of a beard trim! Alas, I think the beard trim will be coming first!

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.