

Thursday January 21st, Thursday in the Second Week 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.

Well the rain seems to have been replaced by the wind, but hey ho, and take care!

Christ the High Priest is holy, stainless, different from sinners, higher than the heavens. He does not need to offer sacrifices for himself. So Christ's ministry, Hebrews 7:25-8:6, is not a shadow or copy, but the very essence of ministry and service itself; *'Jesus has been given a ministry of a far higher order'*.

In the Gospel, Mark 3:7-12, huge crowds followed Jesus from all over the region seeking healing, wanting to touch Jesus, having the faith that he would do so. We are also told that the unclean spirits have knowledge of who Jesus is, *'You are the Son of God,'* they shout.

Lord,

I come before you today in need of your healing hand.

In you all things are possible.

Hold my heart within yours, and renew my mind, body, and soul.

I am lost, but I come to you with grace.

You gave us life, and you also give us the gift of infinite joy.

Give me the strength to move forward on the path you've laid out for me.

Guide me towards better health,

and give me the wisdom to identify those you've placed around me to help me get better, in mind, body and soul.

Through the same Christ our Lord, Amen.

Given the weather, how about singing 'Our God Reigns' today? Every pun intended.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mJWb1jPI78>

And today we have the Memorial of the Virgin and Martyr St. Agnes, one of the most-celebrated Roman martyrs. According to tradition, Agnes was a beautiful girl, about 12 or 13 years old, who refused marriage, stating that she could have no spouse but Jesus Christ. Her suitors revealed her Christianity, which was then condemned as a cult, and in punishment she was sent to a brothel. Awed by her purity and presence, all but one of the Roman youths left her untouched; in his attempt to

violate her, the sole attacker was miraculously struck blind, whereupon Agnes healed him with prayer. Later, after refusing to renounce her faith, she was murdered during the persecution of the Christians by the Roman emperor Diocletian and was buried beside the Via Nomentana. Pope Damasus embellished her tomb with sacred verses, and many of the Fathers, including St Ambrose and St Augustine, spoke of her with great praise. She is mentioned in the Eucharistic Prayer I. On her feast day two lambs are blessed in the Church of Sant'Agnese in Rome, and from their wool are made the pallia sent by the pope to archbishops as tokens of jurisdiction. She is Patron Saint of young girls, so let's pray for her intercession for all our young people, especially in these difficult times.

*O Little St. Agnes,
so young and yet made so strong
and wise by the power of God,
protect by your prayers
all the young people of every place.
Give them strength in temptation
and a true repentance when they fail.
Help them to find safe pastures in His Church
and in her holy sacraments.
May you lead us to the wedding banquet of heaven
to rejoice with you and all the Saints in Christ
who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.*

January 20th is the Eve of St Agnes, traditionally the night when girls and unmarried women wishing to dream of their future husbands would perform certain rituals before going to bed. Bizarrely, these rituals included transferring pins one by one from a pincushion to a sleeve whilst reciting the Lord's Prayer, walking backwards upstairs to bed or fasting all day. Another tradition was to eat a portion of dumb cake (a salty confection prepared with friends in total silence) before retiring to bed, hoping to dream of a future love: 'St Agnes, that's to lovers kind, come ease the trouble of my mind.' In Scotland, girls would meet in a field of crops at midnight, throw grain on to the soil and pray: 'Agnes sweet and Agnes fair, Hither, hither, now repair; Bonny Agnes, let me see, The lad who is to marry me.' John Keats wrote a poem, 'The Eve of St. Agnes,' which refers to the tradition. So who did YOU dream about last night?

In other news, Tobias, The Presbytery Cat, demonstrates how unimpressed he is with my daily dose of 'Bargain Hunt'.

Enjoy the day!

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.