

Tuesday February 2nd, The Feast of The Presentation of The Lord.

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 so today we celebrate the lovely Feast of The Presentation of the Lord, a Feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth, otherwise known as 'Candlemas,' and the traditional conclusion of our Christmas celebrations. It commemorates the presentation of Jesus in the Temple forty days after his birth, an occasion when offerings were made and the mother was ritually purified. Simeon's prophecy referred to Jesus as 'a light to enlighten the pagans,' summing up the Christmas theme of light coming into the darkness, but also points towards the paschal mystery, for 'he was destined to be a sign that is rejected,' neatly moving us from Christmas through to Passiontide and Eastertide. We go to meet the Lord as Simeon did. Let us walk as children of the light to bear witness through our Christian lives to Christ the saviour of the world.

Our first reading today comes from the prophet Malachi. Centuries before the coming of Christ a prophet foretold that the Lord would visit his Temple and purify his people. Malachi 3:1-4 asks us, *'Who will be able to resist the day of his coming? Who will remain standing when he appears?'*

The second, Hebrews 2:14-18 reminds us that God visited us in a special way through his Son Jesus who became human in all things like us. He redeemed us by becoming like us, and, *'because he has himself been through temptation he is able to help others who are tempted.'*

And our Gospel Luke 2:22-40 tells us of the Presentation of Jesus, with Simeon praying what has become known as the 'Nunc Dimmitus.'

*'Now master, you can let your servant go in peace,
Just as you promised;
Because my eyes have seen the salvation
Which you prepared for all the nations to see,
A light to enlighten the pagans,
And the glory of your people Israel.'*

We also meet the prophetess Anna who *'spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Israel.'*

The Gospel concludes with the Holy Family returning to Nazareth; *'Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.'*

*Almighty ever-living God,
We humbly implore your majesty
That, just as your Only Begotten Son was presented on this day in the Temple
In the substance of our flesh,
So, by your grace,
We may be presented to you with minds made pure,
And, as you fulfilled Simeon's expectation
That he would not see death
Until he had been privileged to welcome Christ,
So may we, going forth to greet the Lord,
Obtain the gift of eternal life.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Traditionally we bless candles on this Feast Day, to be used throughout the liturgical year, and this is one of the beautiful blessings with which we are provided:

*O God, true light who create light eternal,
Spreading it far and wide,
Pour, we pray, into the hearts of the faithful,
The brilliance of perpetual light,
So that all who are brightened in your holy temple
By the splendour of these candles
May happily reach the light of your glory.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

And here is a prayer for our times upon lighting a candle:

*Dear God, our loving Father,
I light this candle to represent each and every one of us whose lives have been touched and changed by coronavirus.
Their light also reminds us of Jesus Christ, Your Son, who is the light of the world and the light in our darkness.
Give us, we pray, comfort in our anxiety and fear, courage and strength in our suffering, patience and compassion in our caring, consolation in our grieving.
But above all, give us hope now and always, through the same Jesus Christ Our Lord.
Amen.*

I hope your day is filled with light and love.

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.