

Thursday February 4th, Thursday in the Fourth 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.

So Thursday it is, and we continue with our lunchtime masses, where it is so lovely to see people. Many thanks to the sacristans, stewards, servers, cleaners, ministers and readers who keep the liturgies going as beautiful and as safely as possible.

In the old covenant we just expected a God of lonely majesty, a complete separateness from God, a prostrating fear. Think of Moses before the burning bush. Christians have something different - the new glories of heaven with the joyful assembly of the angels and God's people; we have God the judge, but also Jesus the perfect high priest. Hebrew 12:18-019,21-24 tells us that in Jesus *'we have the mediator who brings a new covenant and a blood for purification which pleads more insistently than Abel's.'*

In Mark 6:7-13 Jesus sends his disciples out on their first mission - this was to be the first test of their faith and apostleship. Jesus gives the disciples instructions about how they should conduct themselves and what their lifestyle is to be, as well as giving them authority over the unclean spirits. *'So they set off to preach repentance; and they cast out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.'* Help us to be the best missionaries we can be for Christ, preaching and living out the teaching of Christ, as a witness to his word:

Here I am, Lord, send me; to the ends of the earth; send me to the rough, the savage pagans of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort in earth, or earthly comfort: send me to death itself, if it be but in Thy service and to promote Thy kingdom. (St. Frances Xavier)

Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous; Teach me to serve thee as thou deservest; To give and not to count the cost, To fight and not to seek for rest, To labour and not to seek reward, Save that of knowing that I do thy will. (Ignatius of Loyola)

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love, Where there is injury, pardon. And where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light. And where there is sadness, joy. (Saint Francis of Assisi).

And why don't we sing the Prayer of St. Francis, 'Make Me a Channel of Your Peace.'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4BVqj_V4gM

This morning's prayer video for the children was about online studying, which many of our children are doing at the moment. I'm also doing some studying online, and I have to tell you it's not easy. It's very solitary and you have no one immediately to go for help or discuss and ponder on things with. It's no fun. Perhaps you could say this prayer I wrote for all our children – and your Parish Priest.

God our Heavenly Father

I'm online learning, and sometimes it's difficult.

I can't just put up my hand and ask the teacher, and my friends aren't sitting around me so I can't ask them. I will email a question and wait for the answer, but it's not always easy.

So at this difficult time, Lord, I ask you help me.

Give me a clear mind, so I can understand.

Give me the energy to enthuse, and be glad about learning.

Give me a thankful heart for the teachers who have put all this work together for me.

Give me a curious brain, that makes me want to know and do different things.

Give me understanding to know that I am not alone, and many other people feel like this.

Give me a decent wi-fi signal, so my learning journey can continue.

And give me hope, that one day soon, we will all be back together in our classes,

With our friends and our teachers,

learning, playing, singing, and praying.

And we make this and all our prayers, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

And thanks to everyone who has been supporting the TechFund to help our online learners. The fund is still open and I'll reveal the final total on this weekend's Newsletter and Message.

By the way, here's a tip for you online: Don't use "beef stew" as a computer password. It's not stroganoff.

Oh, and here's a picture of me – and mini-me. Have a great day y'all!

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.