

Tuesday February 9th, Tuesday in the Fifth 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.

Good morning on this cold and fro-o-sty morning! If you are coming to noonday mass today please take care on the roads and pavements! Just back from the Hall where we've been flow testing more of the staff from the school and the nursery. All going very well, and it's great serving the community in such a way in these strange times.

We continue the creation story. Genesis 1:20-2:4 is presented in the style of a teacher of the time, having a pattern that was easy to remember and recite. As God creates he describes each thing as 'good' until, *'God created man in the image of himself... and indeed it was very good.'*

In Mark 7:1-13 the Pharisees and some of the scribes are critical of the fact that Jesus did not observe the various purification rites. He reminds them that sincerity and internal purification are what is really important; *'You make God's word null and void for the sake of the tradition which you have handed down.'* Psalm 51 is a special prayer for repentance and purity of heart:

*Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin is always before me.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.
Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,*

And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

O Lord, open my lips,

And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

For our hymn today let us sing ‘Do Not Be Afraid, For I Have Redeemed You’, for if we place our trust in Him, indeed, we need never be afraid: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTTPevymr7I>

Today’s Saint in the international calendar is the great character from the New Testament Saint Onesimus. St. Onesimus was a slave to Philemon, an influential man who had been converted by St. Paul. Onesimus offended Philemon and fled in order to escape any sort of retribution. He then met St. Paul while Paul was in a Roman prison. Shortly after, Onesimus was baptized. Paul then sent a letter to Philemon asking for Onesimus’ freedom, so Onesimus could become one of his own assistants. This letter is the Epistle to Philemon and entreats Philemon to accept Onesimus ‘*no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a brother, beloved especially to me.*’ Philemon pardoned Onesimus and he returned to faithfully serve St. Paul. We know that St. Paul made him, with Tychicus, the bearer of his Epistle to the Colossians. Later, as St. Jerome and other fathers testify, he became an ardent preacher of the Gospel and succeeded St. Timothy as bishop of Ephesus. He was cruelly tortured in Rome, for 18 days, by a governor who was infuriated by his preaching. Onesimus’ legs and thighs were broken with bludgeons before he was stoned to death in the year 90.

God of liberty,

through Saint Paul the Apostle

you brought your servant Saint Onesimus

to spiritual and temporal freedom;

liberate us, we pray,

so that we may be equipped to serve you fully.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Over in Hong Kong my brother tells me that preparations for Chinese New Year are really getting underway, and sends the attached picture of the Chinese deities of longevity, status and wealth!

All that talk of purification earlier made me think about the man who invented hand sanitiser. He must be rubbing his hands. I’ll get my coat.

Enjoy the sunshine, but stay safe and well!

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.