

Saturday February 13th, Saturday 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.

Early Message this morning, as this weekend, along with three of the teachers from school, I'm attending a whole weekend (the first of two) course in Neuro Linguistic Programming. I say 'attending', it's actually all on 'Zoom' so I'll be upstairs at the computer all day. As the course goes right through from 9am to 5pm Father Tom Butler will be joining us to say the Masses this weekend. I'm sure he'll be given a great welcome, and I thank him for enabling me to attend the course.

The consequence of our fall from grace is that people would suffer pain - evil would always remain in our lives, as Genesis 3:9-24. But there is also the hint, or even a promise of a saviour in future times. *'O Lord you have been our refuge from one generation to the next.'*

In the Gospel, Mark 8:1-10 we have an account of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes; *'they ate as much as they wanted and they collected seven basketfuls off the leftovers... There had been about four thousand people.'* Like yesterday's 'Ephphatha' and the Sacramental gestures used by Jesus, so today's Gospel is ultimately a prefiguring of the Eucharist in which Jesus would give his flesh and blood as spiritual food. This is St. Thomas Aquinas' Thanksgiving Prayer after receiving the Eucharist:

*I thank You, O holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God,
who have deigned, not through any merits of mine,
but out of the condescension of Your goodness, to satisfy me a sinner, Your unworthy servant,
with the precious Body and Blood of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
I pray that this Holy Communion be not a condemnation to punishment for me,
but a saving plea to forgiveness.
May it be to me the armour of faith and the shield of a good will.
May it be the emptying out of my vices and the extinction of all unworthy desires;
and increase of charity and patience, of humility and obedience, and all virtues
a strong defence against the snares of all my enemies, visible and invisible;
the perfect quieting of all my evil impulses of flesh and spirit,
binding me firmly to You, the one true God
and a happy ending of my life.
I pray too that You will deign to bring me, a sinner, to that ineffable banquet*

*where You with Your Son and the Holy Spirit, are to your Saints true light,
fulfilment of desires, eternal joy, unalloyed gladness, and perfect bliss*

Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

And so let us sing the Eucharistic Hymn 'O Bread of Heaven.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5O8IRLosI8>

And for those feeling unable to come to mass, and are praying at home and online, let me once again give you the Act of Spiritual Communion:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire You in my soul. Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though You are already there, I embrace You and unite myself wholly to You; do not let me ever be separated from You. Amen.

With all this studying I'm doing Tobias, the Presbytery Cat, is giving me his I'm-going-to-make-you-feel-guilty-for-ignoring-me look. And he does it so well!

I hope you are having a great weekend, and look forward to seeing you in the week, maybe on Ash Wednesday, and next weekend. 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.