

Monday February 15th, Monday in the Sixth Week in Ordinary Time, Year B

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.

I hope you all had a good weekend. It was quite a full one here in the house, perched in front of my computer for most of the day, but having a great time on the study course, which was thoroughly enjoyable and incredibly enlightening, and is definitely going to be beneficial both personally, spiritually and ministerially. Hopefully the next (and last) weekend of the diploma in March will be in person!

Well, it's Ash Wednesday in a couple of days' time so we have just two extracts from Genesis to take us up to Lent. The first, Genesis 4:1-15, 25, tells the well-known story of Cain and Abel. It is an account of fratricide, brother against brother, of the conflict between the farmer and the stockgrazer, and the difference between the settler and the nomad. Because humankind was bound by evil, we have jealousy, and people killing each other, which was never meant to be.

In Mark 8:11-13 the Pharisees start a discussion with Jesus demanding a sign from heaven. *'With a sigh that came straight from the heart,'* Jesus tells them that no sign will be given to this generation, firstly because they would not see and understand, and secondly because they had the person of Jesus, the Messiah in front of them, and don't recognise him, because they don't see him with the eyes of faith:

*For the gift of faith
which sees beyond the present moment
and looks to an eternity,
we thank you.*

*For the gift of faith
small as a mustard seed, which has power
within its simplicity,
we thank you.*

*For the gift of faith
bestowed on those who would simply come to Jesus,
hearts open in humility,
we thank you.*

Amen.

‘How Lovely On the Mountains are the Feet of him’ with some lovely pictures, might be a nice hymn to start the week. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= IHBEIWZ9k4>

It’s hard to believe that Lent is on its way, and it was mid Lent last year that we first went in to full Lockdown. Nevertheless, it’s time to start thinking about our Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. If you have any suggestions what I should get up to during Lent, please let me know. I hope to do the odd live streamed Stations of the Cross, and will also put up some versions on our YouTube Channel. Unfortunately I cannot put up any of the modern ones as they are copyright and YouTube is considered as ‘broadcasting’ and there’s been at least one case where a Church was fined for breaching copyright in its online content, so we do have to be careful. Incidentally the nine o’clock mass on Ash Wednesday will be live streamed and available after that on the YouTube site. These are words I never thought I’d be saying last March! Anyway, here’s a prayer for all those involved in broadcasting, which I guess now includes St. Bernadette’s:

Lord, we thank you that we have come to know you as one who speaks in a multitude of creative ways in a world which so often fails to hear you, and because of that, so often believes the lies which surround us.

We pray for those involved in broadcasting who are your followers, that you would enable them to offer truth to overcome the lies, light to shine in dark places, refreshment to those who are thirsty and food to those who go hungry.

Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

It’s been drawn to my attention that in yesterday’s quiz I didn’t give the answer to question 12.

Which of the following does not take place on Good Friday?

- A. Intercessory prayers
- B. Reading from the scriptures
- C. Consecration
- D. Veneration of the cross

The answer is C; there is no consecration on Good Friday. We have our Scripture reading of the Passion, the great Prayers of Intercession, the Veneration of Cross (I guess there’ll be no kissing of the cross this year), followed by Holy Communion with hosts that have been consecrated the night before at the Mass on Maundy Thursday. I was very worried about our Christmas Services that they would be cold and lacking atmosphere, but they were truly beautiful, so hopefully we will be able to somehow come up with some way of celebrating our Passiontide and Easter liturgies with due reverence and beauty.

Over in Australia it is back to Lockdown for the State of Victoria, as you may have gathered with all the shenanigans with the tennis players in Melbourne. My sister sent a picture of Lal Lal Falls writing,

'This is five minutes from our house. Normally we come here at dusk to watch the Kangaroos, but as we are in lockdown and only allowed out within a 5km radius of home we came for a mid-morning walk.' And beautiful it looks!

Have a lovely start to the week.

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.