

Thursday February 18<sup>th</sup> 2021, Thursday after Ash Wednesday

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.

Well our two lovely covid safe Ashes masses beautifully began our season of Lent, with ashes being sprinkled on people's heads. I wonder if we will be doing that next year? I'm sure some of the ways we have had to adapt may prove fruitful in the future. Many thanks to the readers, ministers, servers, sacristans, stewards, organist and videographer that make our masses possible.

Obeys the Commandments of God and you will live is the text today. Let yourself be drawn away from God and you will die - you will not receive God's promise. Deuteronomy 30:15-20 calls us to '*Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants can live in the love of the Lord your God.*'

And Luke 9:22-25 puts the coming of Holy Week in six weeks' time right to the fore as Jesus refers to his passion and death: his followers, if they are true to him, will also find it tough. '*If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross everyday and follow me.*' We often use the phrase 'take up his cross' to refer to the challenges of life, some trivial, some very great indeed, 'everyday' - which is word added by Luke which is not in Matthew's version of the line. There have been a lot of extra crosses in the past year, and many of people have suffered greatly, with illness or the loss of a loved one. This is a beautiful prayer 'in time of suffering.'

*Behold me, my beloved Jesus,  
weighed down under the burden of my trials and sufferings,  
I cast myself at Your feet,  
that You may renew my strength and my courage,  
while I rest here in Your Presence.  
Permit me to lay down my cross in Your Sacred Heart,  
for only Your infinite goodness can sustain me;  
only Your love can help me bear my cross;  
only Your powerful hand can lighten its weight.  
O Divine King, Jesus,  
whose heart is so compassionate to the afflicted,  
I wish to live in You; suffer and die in You.  
During my life be to me my model and my support;  
At the hour of my death, be my hope and my refuge.*

*Amen.*

‘Do Not Be Afraid, For I Have Redeemed You’ would be a very fitting hymn to sing after that prayer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psgn0tAp6IE>

Yesterday a Parishioner handed me a little prayer card called ‘Take Time’. It’s particularly appealing to these lockdown times because we all have more ‘time’ on our hands, and perhaps time to reflect on what is important in life, what we are missing, and what we are able to do without. Here’s the prayer:

*Take time to think:*

*It is the source of power.*

*Take time to play:*

*It is the secret of perpetual youth.*

*Take time to read:*

*It is the fountain of wisdom.*

*Take time to pray:*

*It is the greatest of gifts.*

*Take time to love and be loved:*

*It is a God-given privilege.*

*Take time to be friendly:*

*It is the road to happiness.*

*Take time to laugh:*

*It is the music of the soul.*

*Take time to give:*

*It is too short a day to be selfish.*

*Take time to work:*

*It is the price of success.*

*Take time to do charity:*

*It is the key to heaven.*

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Margaret Berry (the sister of our choir mistress Kath), whose funeral service I will be celebrating in Church and at Carleton this afternoon. *May she rest in the peace, love and light of Christ.* One of her instructions for the funeral is that everyone has to wear odd shoes. I’ll try and do my bit, as you can see.

Make sure you take some time to enjoy this day! And any suggestions for my Lenten challenge?

Incidentally, if you are going to reply to this email, please start a brand new email to the address, as some of them seem to go awry or into spam. Cheers!

And 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.