

Saturday February 20th, 2021, Saturday 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.

And we're back at the weekend, and I'm back for the weekend masses!

Today's readings are on the themes of almsgiving and repentance. Isaiah 58:8-14 tells us that if you avoid injustice, if you share with the needy, your light will rise in the darkness and the Lord will guide you. You will be like a spring that never runs dry, you shall find happiness in the Lord. *'I will feed you on the heritage of Jacob your Father. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'*

In Luke 5:27-32 we have the call of Matthew Levi, the tax collector. I love the immediacy of Matthew's response to the Jesus. Jesus says, 'Follow me', *'And leaving everything he got up and followed him.'* As we know tax collectors were hated people who paid the Roman authorities to do the job in order that they could exhort money from their own people. Matthew's immediate response suggests that Matthew may have been looking for a way out of a job which made him such a despised person, perhaps he knew his unkind actions. And now he has a new life. Jesus is immediately criticised for associating with tax collectors and sinners, but comes straight back at the Pharisees and Scribes with the great line, *'It is not those who are well who need the doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the virtuous, but sinners to repentance.'* And thank goodness he did! Let us pray Psalm 51 and thank God for his mercy and forgiveness.

*Have mercy on me, O God,
according to Your unfailing love;
according to Your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
Against You, You only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in Your sight,
so that You are proved right when You speak
and justified when You judge.
Surely I have been a sinner from birth,*

*sinful from the time my mother conceived me...
Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me and I will be whiter than snow...
Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from Your presence
or take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.
Then will I teach transgressors Your ways,
and sinners will turn back to You.*

‘God forgave my sin in Jesus’ name’ would be a most appropriate hymn for today (even if this version is rather leisurely for my taste!).

In a Lenten spirit of almsgiving, four of our Parishioners have started a sponsored campaign to raise money for CAFOD, in particular to supply water to areas in need, as you may see in this video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usdO1bFDFRY&feature=emb_title

Karen, Claire, Carla and Liz are pledging to walk 10,000 steps a day for CAFOD’s ‘Walk for Water’ challenge. They have set up a fundraising page and have already walked 25,000 steps and raised almost a £100. If anyone would like to sponsor them they’d be very grateful. Here’s the link

<https://walk.cafod.org.uk/fundraising/karen-claire-carla-and-liz-are-walking-for-wa2021>

and well done Ladies! Keep us posted as to how you are doing!

*Loving God,
we ask for Your blessings on children, mothers, fathers,
and communities who are thirsty.
Purify, protect, and multiply their water sources.
Heavenly Father,
remind us of Your command to love our neighbours as we love ourselves.
Don’t let us rest until we know we have done everything we can
to meet others’ need for water.
Strengthen our resolve that everyone may fully enjoy the benefits of clean water
And essentials like education, gardens of fresh produce, and good health.*

Earlier this week my sister wrote that lockdown restrictions in Australia are being lifted, as they are in Hong Kong. My brother wrote: ‘Some of the covid restrictions in Hong Kong are starting to be lifted, with restaurants opening in the evening and Liza allowed to get her nails done. Date Night was back on Friday and we treated ourselves to some awesome sashimi. Sashimi is fresh, raw fish that is sliced

very thinly and served uncooked. A traditional Japanese dish, it is usually served with daikon radish, pickled ginger, wasabi and soy sauce as the first course in a meal. As sashimi is eaten raw, the fish must be best quality, and it should be as fresh as possible – some Japanese restaurants keep the fish alive in tanks right up to the minute they prepare it. Highly skilled chefs train for years to perfect the art of slicing the fish, according to variety, to maximise enjoyment. ' I think I'll stick to fasting and abstinence...

I hope you are having a great weekend!

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.