

Monday February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, The Feast of the Chair of St. Peter

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 so we await to see what Mr. Johnson is going to say to us this evening, as we may see glimpses of hope, which appropriately enough in this season 'springs eternally'.

Today we break out of our Lenten Purple weeds, to put on the white vestment for the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter. This is a very old feast, going back to the fourth century. It has been kept on this day ever since as a symbol of the unity of the Church founded on the Apostle Peter. The celebration of the 'Cathedra Petri', the Chair of St. Peter, recalls the ministry conferred by Christ onto the Prince of the Apostles and continued in an unbroken line right down to the present Pope. It is an opportunity for the faithful to renew their communion with the Pope and follow his guidance and teaching.

The First Letter of St. Peter 5:1-4 finds Peter anxious to make sure that the Good News is preached in its entirety to the people. He gives practical advice to those who are looking after the various churches. Be like a shepherd and have an interest in your people. Do the work eagerly and gladly and *'when the chief shepherd appears, you will be given the crown of unfading glory.'*

Our Gospel, Matthew 16:13-19 is the very important and well-known account of the confession of Peter: *'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'* You can hear the relief and happiness in Jesus' voice that the Apostles have finally come to some understanding of who he is, and he goes on to confer a new name and a new role and honour upon Peter; *'You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church... I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.'*

*Grant, we pray, Almighty god,  
That no tempests may disturb us,  
For you have set us fast  
On the rock of the Apostle Peter's confession of faith.  
May the prayers of your Church,  
With St. Peter as her shepherd,  
Come to an eternal inheritance,  
For it is through his teaching,  
That she holds the faith in its integrity.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

‘The Church’s One Foundation Is Jesus Christ Our Lord’ would be a good song to sing today as we confess with Peter that Jesus is indeed Christ our Lord:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jotNbcFeIX4>

‘Full In The Panting Heart Of Rome’ is not in our hymn book, so here’s a video (although not a very good one), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liIgMvqUo7E> and here’s the words so you can sing along:

*Full in the panting heart of Rome  
Beneath the apostle’s crowning dome.  
From pilgrim’s lips that kiss the ground,  
Breathes in all tongues one only sound:  
    God Bless our Pope! God Bless our Pope!  
    God Bless our Pope! the great, the good!  
The golden roof, the marble walls,  
The Vatican’s majestic halls,  
The note redoubles, till it fills  
With echoes sweet the seven hills  
    God Bless our Pope! God Bless our Pope!  
    God Bless our Pope! the great, the good!  
Then surging through each hallowed gate,  
Where martyrs glory, in peace await  
It sweeps beyond the solemn plain,  
Peals over Alps, across the main.  
    God Bless our Pope! God Bless our Pope!  
    God Bless our Pope! the great, the good!  
From torrid south to frozen north,  
The wave harmonious stretches forth,  
Yet strikes no chord more true to Rome’s,  
Than rings within our hearts and homes.  
    God Bless our Pope! God Bless our Pope!  
    God Bless our Pope! the great, the good!*

And here’s a couple of throwback photos to my Roman Days: the first shows my parents standing outside St. Peter’s, c.1988, and second is my sister on the roof of St. Peters in 1993 which gives you some idea of the size of those statues on the front of the amazing building!

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.