

Tuesday February 23rd, 2021, Tuesday in the First Week in Lent

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.

A few more months of semi lockdown ahead, but perhaps there is some light at the end of the tunnel. As I said yesterday, hope springs!

A beautiful passage from the Prophet Isaiah this morning. The word of God is somewhat like rain and snow. It comes from the heavens, waters the earth, gives growth and food and then returns to the heavens. Isaiah 55:10-11 reminds us that *'the word that goes from My mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.'*

And in the Gospel Jesus teaches us the pattern of all prayer, the Our Father, but also reminds us, *'in your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard.'*

Our Father: God is 'our' Father, the Father not only of Christ but of all of us. We pray to Him as brothers and sisters to Christ, and to one another.

Who art in Heaven: God is in Heaven, but that does not mean that He is distant from us. He is exalted above all of Creation, but our true home is with Him.

Hallowed be thy name: we desire that everyone should honour God's name as holy, because acknowledging God's holiness draws us into the right relationship with Him.

Thy kingdom come: We look forward to the coming of His kingdom at the end of time, but we also work toward it today by living our lives as He wishes us to live them.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven: We work toward the coming of the kingdom of God by conforming our lives to His will, and to carry out His will in this life, and pray for all humankind to do so as well.

Give us this day our daily bread: we petition God to provide us with everything that we need (rather than want), that which is essential for everyday life, including that which nourishes our souls as well, the Bread of Life Holy Communion.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us: here, we ask God to forgive us our sins—but only after we have forgiven the sins of others against us. We beg God to show us mercy, but we must first show mercy toward others.

And lead us not into temptation: Here, knowledge of the Greek word translated into English as 'lead' is helpful. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church notes, 'the Greek means both 'do not

allow us to enter into temptation' and 'do not let us yield to temptation.' We ask God to keep us from entering into trials that test our faith and virtue, and to keep us strong when we must face such trials.

But deliver us from evil: The 'evil' here is not just bad things; in the Greek, it is 'the evil one'—that is, Satan himself, the one who tempts us. As the Catechism tells us, 'when we ask to be delivered from the Evil One, we pray as well to be freed from all evils, present, past, and future, of which he is the author or instigator.'

Amen. So be it.

So let's pray and sing the prayer we have come to know as 'The Our Father'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OncxJA0MIQQ>

Talking of hope, this is the prayer I wrote for the children's video yesterday, after talking about hope, the sign for hope in BSL, and how we have to play a part in making our hopes and dreams happen:

God our heavenly Father, I hope.

I hope you had a good half term

I hope we have a great start to the week.

I hope everyone stays safe and healthy.

I hope we can all soon play together.

I hope we can visit our family and friends near and far.

I hope we can sing our hymns at Church again.

I hope we can soon visit cafes, cinemas and theatres.

I hope we can get over this time of coronavirus.

And I hope that if I can do anything to make these things happen

I will do it with all my heart.

Amen.

Ooh, nearly forgot, it's the Feast of St. Polycarp today, a second century Bishop of Smyrna, in what is now Turkey, who was converted by St. John the Evangelist. As an old man he was urged by the Romans to renounce Christ to save his life, to which he replied, 'For eighty-six years I have served him and he never wronged me. How can I renounce the King who saved me?' He was executed, his body burnt, and his followers collected his relics and wrote about his life.

God of all creation,

Who were pleased to give St. Polycarp a place in the company of martyrs.

Grant that through sharing with him in the chalice of Christ,

We may rise through the Holy Spirit to eternal life.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In other news, Tobias, the Presbytery Cat, does his best to help out in the office. At least, I think he's helping out.

As I said to the children, I hope you have a great day – but you are the ones who have to make it great.

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.