

Wednesday February 24th, 2021, Wednesday 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.

Well given the amount of rain it chucked down in the night appropriately enough our first reading today is the climax of the famous story of Jonah. He tried to get away from God and the duty of preaching that he was given, which is why he found himself in the belly of the sea monster. Jonah 3:1-10 tells of the success Jonah had in his preaching, after which the people of the city of Ninevah fasted and repented, *'and God relented: he did not inflict on them the disaster which he had threatened.'*

And Jonah is referenced in the Gospel by Jesus when the people are asking for a sign. All the signs the crowd need are to be found in the scriptures. Take the example of the Ninevites and Jonah and turn away from sin - remember, greater than Jonah is here, the Son of God himself. But, alas, the 'Wicked Generation' as he refers to them do not recognise Jesus.

*Jesus, I recognise You as the Son of God,
that you died on the cross to rescue me from sin and death
I love you and give myself to you.
I ask to receive your forgiveness
and ask you to take your rightful place in my life as my Saviour and Lord.
Come reign in my heart,
fill me with your love and your life,
and help me to become a person who is truly loving.
Live in me. Love through me. Thank you, God.
Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

'Sweet Heart of Jesus, Fount of Love and Mercy' may inspire us today.

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

Name checking Jonah reminds me of 'Jonah Man Jazz' a 12-minute-long pop cantata by the composer Michael Hurd which I remember singing many times in school and in several concerts. It tells the story of Jonah in a jazzy witty idiom beginning:

*Nineveh city was a city of sin / the jazzin' and the jivin' made a terrible din.
Beat groups playing rock and roll / and the Lord when he heard it said 'Bless my soul'*

And when thrown into the ocean:

When Jonah sank into the sea he closed his eyes and prayed,

*Oh Lord, I'm very sorry that your word I disobeyed,
If only you will only come and save me I will do as you command.
Instead of treading water let me tread upon the land.*

And when everyone in Nineveh repents, everyone is happy:

*We had a wonderful party and Jonah had a whale of a time
But now that we've really repented everythin's goin' be fine
We let our hair down in plenty and boy we had the blues on the run
But even though we have repented our dancin' days ain't done
Dancin' in praise of the Lord, singin' his praises all night
Spreadin' the gospel word, everythin's turned out right.*

I found this brilliant video on YouTube of the Cantata, which even adds a little postscript from the Book of Jonah, in which Jonah has to have explained the whys and wherefores of forgiveness. Enjoy it with your children and grandchildren. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByBDnin6b4E>

I even discovered there is a CD of it, along with four other Pop Cantatas by the same composer (including 'Swingin' Samson' which I also remember performing), so that was immediately ordered from Amazon! It arrives tomorrow!

The lift up from lockdown continues in Australia where my sister writes, *'We are at our friends Anne & Pat's house (where we watched the footy Grand Final). Anne holds an annual blackberry party on her birthday where everyone picks fruit from her garden to take home and she makes a big vat of blackberry ice cream which everybody takes turns to churn. Back at home Antonia turned the harvest into plum and blackberry jam.'* A rival to Eileen's marmalade perhaps? And why does my sister have a picture of Stand and Hilda Ogden on her fridge?

Make it through the rain, and enjoy what you can of the day.

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.