

Thursday February 25th, 2021, Thursday 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 I hope you all did make it through the rain (I got soaked going for a blood test down to Moor Park) and have woken up to what looks like a gloriously sunny day!

One of my favourite books of the Bible is most definitely the Book of Esther. Esther the Queen has both physical and spiritual beauty. When she discovers that her people are to be massacred, she – fittingly in the time of Lent - fasts and prays, and today's Gospel, Est 14:1.3-5,13-14, is the great prayer of Esther. Her courage came from her belief that God alone could save his people and her confidence that he would answer her prayers, and knows she is going to need God's help and support to confront her husband the King.

*My Lord, our King, the only one,
Come to my help, for I am alone
And have no helper but you
And am about to take my life in my hands.*

She asks for courage to confront the King:

*As for me, give me courage
King of gods and master of all power
Put persuasive words into my mouth when I face the lion.*

And concludes:

*Come to my help, for I am alone
And have no one but you Lord.*

And Esther's prayer is answered.

Esther's Faith and commitment, is reflected in Matthew 7:7-12 where Jesus reminds us that we have only to trust in the goodness and providence of God and then ask him to give us what we need. *'If you who are evil know how to give their children what is good for them, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask him,'* but for that reason, Jesus adds, *'Always treat others as you would like them to treat you.'*

O Jesus, Who has said, 'Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened,' through the intercession of Mary, Your Most Holy Mother, I knock, I seek, I ask that my prayer be granted.

O Jesus, Who has said, 'All that you ask of the Father in My Name, He will grant you,' through the intercession of Mary Your Most Holy Mother, I humbly and urgently ask your Father in your name that my prayer will be granted.

O Jesus, Who has said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away but My word shall not pass away,' through the intercession of Mary Your Most Holy Mother, I feel confident that my prayer will be granted.

Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

'Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God' with the verse 'Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find,' would be a most suitable hymn today – even if the chorus is full of 'Alleluia's' which we are not meant to be singing in Lent. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1Y8Naj3RFk>

Well yesterday we had Jonah and 'Jonah Man Jazz' and today we have Esther and 'Swan Esther' a pop musical retelling of the biblical story of Esther, the Jewish Queen of the Persian King Ahaseuerus, by Jack Edward Oliver (words) and Nick Munns (music). Nope, never heard of them. The musical was the brainchild of theatre producer David Land in a bid to replicate the earlier success he had achieved with 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat'. It didn't, and is not in the same league as 'Joseph...' Never the less it yielded a 1983 concept album, and even a professional staging at the Young Vic in London in December of that year starring the late, great Stephanie Lawrence as Esther, Denis Quilley as Haman and Clive Carter (several of us saw him as Jesus in 'Superstar' in Blackpool a few years ago) as the minstrel Mordecai. Unfortunately it takes huge liberties with the actually Biblical Book of Esther. In the interests of research for this Message I listened to the album yesterday, and despite an amazing performance by Stephanie Lawrence, I have to record that it is not great, but if you want to dip into it here is Stephanie Lawrence singing 'My Love Is Like a Dream' which is essentially the prayer of Esther which we heard in the first reading. It makes the show sound a lot better than it is. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYGS9j1uETc>

You'll be glad to know that the CD of 'Jonah Man Jazz' arrived, so that's what I'll be humming along to today – and thanks to Jackie for the very appropriate fridge magnet she popped through my letter box. Hopefully the shows *will* be going on soon!

And don't worry, tomorrow's first reading is from the Prophet Ezekiel, and fortunately (as far as I can research) no one has made a pop musical out of that. Yet.

Have a popstastic 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.