

Sunday February 28th, 2021, The Second Sunday in Lent, Year B

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 another lovely Sunday morning to wake up to – and the last day of February! Spring is definitely on its way.

When I was chaplain to Preston Prison there was a sign in the chaplain's office:

I looked for God in the past,
but God said, *My name is not I am who was.*
I looked for God in the future,
but God said, *My name is not I am who will be.*
I looked for God in the present moment,
and God said, *I am here; my name is I Am Who Am.*

The last line of course refers to the book of Exodus where God announces his name to Moses, but the poem (if it is a poem), the poem as a whole, as with today's Gospel of the transfiguration, causes us to look at our relationship with God with strange references to time.

The Gospel of the Transfiguration, which we are presented with every second Sunday of Lent, this year in Mark 9:2-10, presents one moment in time, one moment in history. But in that single moment on Mount Sinai, the past and the future are there with the present. The past is present in the appearance of two of the greatest Old Testament prophets Moses and Elijah. Moses was the law giver, Elijah the great, fiery teacher. For the fact that Jesus is shown transfigured means that in that one moment, the future is also shown. Jesus is seen and described as he was to be seen and described after his resurrection, dazzlingly white, glorified. I sometimes wonder if there were nail wounds in his hands when he was transfigured, I presume so. So, past and future, in one moment in the present, united by the voice of the Father, calling the whole of history to listen to his beloved Son. Eileen, once again, helpfully provides us with a knitted scene.

A lot of people think of the Church solely in terms of the past. They look back to those glorious days when there was Mass on the hour and people were queueing up, and every Church was filled to the rafters. Sometimes our relationship with God might be something more to do with the past than with anything else as. Our prayers and attitude to the deity and our knowledge of the Scriptures and God's Holy Church might be much the same as it was at school. There is a huge difference between a child-

like and a childish faith. The other temptation is think solely of the future; be it in the desperation of falling numbers and fewer priests, or the thinking that the Church will always be there when we need it, a baptism or funeral, or Sunday morning. And until then, that's fine.

All of that strenuously ignores the very important present moment. In the Gospel today the future is glimpsed in the present, everything good and true about the past is brought forward so that one day in the future the glory will be a reality. But that can only be achieved by living every day as a follower of Christ, listening to his words, and the words of his Church – as God calls each of us to do in this very Gospels - and for Peter that involved suffering and death just as it would be for Jesus.

And we too have to live out our faith in the present. Yes taking everything good about the past and moving forward, to one day, please God, eternal glory. The inability to come together to celebrate Sunday mass as we would like has hit many of us very hard, but it has also made us think outside the box as it were, and if we ever do go back to Sunday Mass, there are so many good things we can continue to do, and also find new ways of celebrating and preach the faith together, so that this Parish is a community which gathers on Sunday, but lives and works and prays together every other day as well. Here and now we have to make this Church and a our lives of faith, a place where, each and every day of the week, with Peter we can all say *'it is wonderful for us to be here'*.

Dear Father,

I thank You for the fulfilment of Your Word.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and they beheld His glory.

*I thank You for Your divine power that was seen here on earth,
it is because of this that we can come together and celebrate You.*

I pray that we do not take Your power for granted.

*Your Son was glorified on earth together with You,
with the glory which He had with You before the world was.*

*I thank You for sending Your only begotten Son
so that we could all be saved and one day be transfigured with the glory of your Son.*

Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

As Christ was show in his post-resurrection glory, why don't we all sing 'Thine Be The Glory' and look forward to a joyful Eastertide after a faith-filled Lent.

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

The other day whilst on my healthy exercise walk on the prom I was listening to the 1981 London Cast Recording of 'Sophisticated Ladies, a compilation musical of blues, jazz and Gospel songs, written by the great Duke Ellington, and it includes the song 'Come Sunday'. It uses the phrase *'please come down and see my people through'* and I thought that's exactly what we want, God to see

us through these days of pandemic lockdown. Duke Ellington captures the sense of Sunday being a day of rest and comfort for the weary and downtrodden, and how we need that right now!

*Lord, dear Lord I've loved, God almighty
God of love, please look down and see my people through
Lord, dear Lord I've loved, God almighty
God of love, please look down and see my people through
I believe that sun and moon up in the sky
When the day is grey I know its just clouds passing by
He'll give peace and comfort To every troubled mind
Come Sunday, oh come Sunday, That's the day
Often we feel weary, But he knows our every care
Go to him in secret. He will hear your every prayer
Lillies on the valley They neither toll nor spin
And flowers bloom in spring time, Birds sing
Often we feel weary But he knows our every care
Go to him in secret, He will hear your every prayer
Up from dawn till sunset Man work hard all the day
Come Sunday, oh come Sunday, That's the day*

Beautiful words which, like so many things, take on a new meaning for us in these strange times. It was most famously recorded by Mahalia Jackson, and here it is.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0PlS8nuceA>

Have a restful Sunday, and a happy start to the week. And, no, I still haven't got my keys cut!

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.