

Wednesday March 3rd, 2021, Wednesday in the Second Week of 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.

And a misty morning it is here in Bispham!

Today's readings both focus on suffering. In Jeremiah 18:8-20 we are reminded that the prophet Jeremiah was persecuted in spite of his good work for the people in praying for them to God. He prays to God, *'They are digging a pit for me. Remember how I stood in your presence to plead on their behalf, to turn your wrath away from them.'*

And in Matthew 20:17-18 Jesus makes reference to his sufferings as he is going towards Jerusalem. *'Now we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man is about to be handed over to the chief priests and scribes.'* He then speaks to the Apostles about the nature of their role of service, *'Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came to serve, not to be served, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'* During this season of Lent we can accompany him and belong to his kingdom if we follow him in his suffering and in his service. Let us align the sufferings that many have gone through over the past year with the sufferings of Jesus. This is 'Prayer in Time Of Suffering.'

*Behold me, my beloved Jesus,
weighed down under the burden of my trials and sufferings,
I cast myself at Your feet,
that You may renew my strength and my courage,
while I rest here in Your Presence.
Permit me to lay down my cross in Your Sacred Heart,
for only Your infinite goodness can sustain me;
only Your love can help me bear my cross;
only Your powerful hand can lighten its weight.
O Divine King, Jesus,
whose heart is so compassionate to the afflicted,
I wish to live in You;
suffer and die in You.
During my life be to me my model and my support;
At the hour of my death,*

be my hope and my refuge.

Amen.

And today we remember Saint Casimir. As a prince of Poland, the second son of King Casimir IV and Elizabeth of Austria, Casimir's life was scheduled to cement his father's authority and increase Poland's power, but he realized from an early age that his life belonged God. Despite pressure, humiliation, and rejection, he stood by that loyalty through his whole life. Born the third of thirteen children in 1461, Casimir was committed to God from childhood. Some of that commitment was the result of a tutor, John Dlugosz, whose holiness encouraged Casimir on his own journey. But for Casimir, the riches around him were temptations to forget his true loyalties. Rebellious against the rich, fashionable clothes he was expected to enjoy, he wore the plainest of clothes. Rejecting even ordinary comforts, he slept little, spending his nights in prayer. And when he did sleep, he lay on the floor not on a royal bed.

Casimir's father saw and admired his strength and sent Casimir as head of an army to take over the throne of Hungary at the request of some nobles there. Casimir felt the whole expedition was wrong but was convinced to go out of obedience to his father, but when soldiers started deserting, he was only too glad to listen to the advice of his officers and turn back home. His father was furious and banished Casimir to a castle in Dobzki, hoping that imprisonment would change Casimir's mind. Casimir's commitment to what he believed was right only grew stronger in his exile and he refused to cooperate with his father's plans any more despite the pressure to give in. He even rejected a marriage alliance his father tried to form. He participated in God's true plan for him, a life of asceticism and prayer. He died at the age of 23 in 1484 from lung disease. He was buried with his favourite song, a Latin hymn to Mary called 'Omni die dic Mariae' which we know as "Daily, Daily Sing to Mary." Because of his love for the song, it is known as the Hymn of St. Casimir though he didn't write it. Casimir is patron saint of Poland and Lithuania. He was buried in the cathedral at Vilna (now Vilnius, Lithuania). When in 1604 his tomb was opened for translation to the church that Sigismund III built in his name, his body was found to be fresh and whole. He was holding this prayer to the Virgin in his hands:

*Every day, O my soul, pay your respects to Mary,
Make her feasts solemn and celebrate her brilliant virtues;
Contemplate and admire her elevation;
Proclaim her blessedness both as Mother and Virgin;
Honour her so that she delivers you from the weight of your sins;
Invoke her so as not to be driven by the torrent of passion;
I do know if anybody can honour Our Lady worthily
Yet he who keeps silent in her praises is senseless;*

*Everyone should exalt and love her in a special way,
And never cease to cherish and pray to her;
O Mary, the honour and glory of all women,
You who God has raised above all creatures;
O Virgin of Mercy, hear the prayers of those who never stop praising you;
Purify those who are guilty and make them worthy of heaven;
Hail, O holy Virgin, through whom the gates of heaven were opened to undeserving souls
You, who, the old serpent's snares never managed to seduce;
You repair and console despairing souls
Preserve us from the evils that will fall on the wicked;
Obtain perpetual peace for me,
And save me from the misfortune of the flames of Gehenna;
Obtain for me to be chaste and modest, gentle, kind, sober, pious, prudent,
 upright and the enemy of all falsehood;
Grant me meekness, love of harmony and purity;
Make me strong and constant on the path of righteousness.*

If, like me, you are unfamiliar with the word, 'Gehenna', it is a new Testament word for where people go to be punished after death, essentially another word for 'hell'. So just for St. Casimir, why don't we sing 'Daily, Daily Sing To Mary'? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Df5WtUTcfq8>

Have a great day – with some more words from Pope Francis to inspire you!

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.