

Thursday March 4th, 2021, Thursday 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.

Our Lenten journeys continue, and both of today's readings focus on materialism. Jeremiah 117:5-10 reminds us that if we put our trust in things of this world, we will become dry and empty - like a dead bush. If we trust in God we shall be like the plant growing near the water: full of life. *'it has no worries in a year of drought, and never ceases to bear fruit.'*

Luke 16:19-31 gives us Jesus' brilliant Parable of Lazarus and the rich man. This develops the ideas of the first reading. The rich man trusted in his money and possessions, never heeded the poor man at his gate, and ended up with nothing in eternity. The poor man was blessed with eternal life. I wonder if Jesus had a wry smile on his face when Abraham says to the rich man, *'If they will not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead,'* as a short time of he said those he words he himself was to rise from the dead, and sadly, there are still many people who don't believe him, and, like the rich man in the Parable, turn their eyes away from the poor and their needs.

Lord Jesus, open my eyes to my wealth and my heart to the poor.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me

Body of Christ, save me

Blood of Christ, inebriate me

Water from the side of Christ, wash me

Passion of Christ, strengthen me

O Good Jesus, hear me

Within Thy wounds, Lord, hide me

Suffer me, not to be separated from Thee

From the malicious enemy defend me

In the hour of my death call me

that I may praise Thee with Thy Saints and Angels,

forever and ever. Amen.

And lets sing the hymn based on that prayer, 'Soul Of My Saviour.'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tO_is6VPn3w

There is a lovely poem about the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus which concludes with the words:

*Life beyond will be far better or far worse,
Only one life to live, no chance to rehearse,
God humbles the proud, and exalts the humble,
So care for others, don't cause them to stumble.
Choose a life of love, have compassion on the lost.
Give generously to the poor and needy, no matter the cost.
For your destiny is fixed at death,
So give God your life; each beat and each breath.*

Incidentally, the name 'Lazarus' means 'God is my helper' and God certainly helped the Lazarus in the Parable, as well as Lazarus, brother of Martha and Mary whom he raised from the dead.

We have now received instructions as to how to go about our Easter Services, and in many ways it will be similar to Christmas, with everything being somewhat low-key, and very stripped back, with no communal singing, and the wearing of masks as usual. We will have a booking in service similar to Christmas. No washing of the feet or procession to the altar of repose, nor any watching afterwards, on Maundy Thursday. Good Friday has no procession or kissing of the cross, and no 'crowd responses' in the reading of the Passion. The Easter Vigil will be somewhat truncated, too. Hey, ho, though if we can achieve something of the beauty of Christmas we will be fine. And at least we can come together for our services, imlike last year – praise God for that. I don't think it will look like this picture taken in 2018 of years ago, sadly (although it does look like I've got a lockdown beard!).

I hope you all have a lovely Thursday!

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.