

Saturday March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Saturday 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.

Welcome to the weekend, and let's hope it's a lovely one. We recorded a third set of Stations of the Cross last night, and they should be on the YouTube channel soon. Next Friday at 7pm we will live stream Stations of the Cross.

Both readings today focus on us *receiving* God's forgiveness and his wonderful willingness to mete it out. First we have the beautiful reading from the prophet Micha. God will grant us his forgiveness, he will pardon our sins, he will take away our faults and show his mercy. Let us go to him with trust and ask for this forgiveness, and praise him for us love, as Micha 7:14-15 says, *'What god can compare with you: taking fault away, pardoning crimes, not cherishing anger for ever, but delighting in showing mercy?'*

Jesus gives the great example of mercy in the familiar story of the Prodigal Son. Like the father, God will welcome back the repentant sinner - he rejoices over his return to life, something which he has to remind the older son. As with many of Jesus' words it is difficult for us to realise just how revolutionary his words were, indeed it was such words that led to his death – and for course, some of his last words on the cross were *'Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'* That's the loving father and brother that God is to us. This is a very old Prayer of Thanksgiving to be recited after receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation:

*O Almighty and merciful God,  
whose mercy is boundless,  
and the riches of whose goodness are infinite,  
I give Thee thanks with all my mind and heart  
for the amazing and exceeding goodness which Thou hast now shown me  
in so graciously pardoning all my sins  
and restoring me to Thy grace and favour.  
Blessed be Thy Divine compassion, O my God,  
and blessed be the incomprehensible love of Thy beloved Son,  
which constrained Him to institute so gentle and so mighty a remedy for our sins.  
Wherefore, in union with all the thanksgivings which have ever ascended to Thee  
from truly penitent hearts, I sing aloud Thy glad praises*

*on behalf of all in Heaven, on earth, and in Purgatory,  
forever and ever. Amen.*

‘God Forgave My Sin In Jesus’ Name’ would be a very appropriate hymn to sing today (although I wish I could find a faster version!) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJ3eklr3fc0>

As I said yesterday, we now have been given guidance as to how we go about our Easter services, and though they will be much lower key than usual – and still, sadly, no singing – but I’m sure we will make them as beautiful as we can. Many thanks to the stewards who have already offered to assist at the various services, and we will be calling on ministers and readers, as well as our amazing musicians and singers. We are going to have to have a ‘booking in’ system, similar to the one at Christmas, with a seating plan so that we can get as many bubbles in Church as is safely possible. There will be no processions or gathering outside or in the hall, all services will begin in Church. So the times of the services will be:

Palm Sunday Vigil: Saturday 5pm

Palm Sunday: Sunday 10am

*Tuesday mass at 12noon as usual, no need to book*

Maundy Thursday: Mass of the Lord’s Supper 7pm

Good Friday: Stations of the Cross 10am

Good Friday: Service of the Lord’s Passion 3pm

Holy Saturday: Easter Vigil 5pm

Easter Sunday: Morning Mass 10am

Please note that both Saturday masses are at our new normal time of 5pm. If you wish to start booking, please do so. Please do so in Church or phone or email stating how many people are in your bubble. If there is huge demand I will consider another mass on Easter morning. Let’s pray for a lovely Holy Week and Easter:

*Lord God,*

*We give you thanks, for you are good, and your mercy is endless.*

*Help us to celebrate Holy Week, in which your church remembers Jesus’ passion and death,*

*We bless you, Lord, for shining your light upon us,*

*And for sending your son to us, in human frailty.*

*To walk the road we walk.*

*Open our eyes that we may see him coming,*

*And may praise him with a pure heart.*

*And may walk in the way of his suffering,*

*And share also in his resurrection.*

*Through Jesus Christ our Lord,*

*who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,*

*one God for ever and ever. Amen.*

News and a picture from my sister in Australia: *'Kangaroos are active at dawn and dusk, so at this time of year with darker mornings, they collide (literally) with early commuters. This one, outside our house, has clearly got a broken leg. We checked, at a distance, for a Joey, then called the roo rescue people. They came to get it and were optimistic for it. Poor wee thing.'*

In the meantime, do enjoy this weekend as best you can.

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.