

Sunday March 7th, 2021, Third 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.

What a beautiful morning to wake up to. The Church is open, and I hope you are having a good weekend.

*Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child,
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to thee.*

In today's Gospel, John 2:13-25, the image of Jesus presented to us is as far from the gentle Jesus, meek and mild school of thought as it is possible to go. Having come to Jerusalem for the religious feast of the Passover, Jesus takes drastic action when he sees the abuses carried out in the temple, worse still abuses that are carried out in the name of God. His house has become a supermarket, and all religious value of place has been lost, as faithful worshippers are fleeced, and money has become the worshipped God. Seeing the abuses, Jesus immediately takes action. The abuses need rectifying, and, out of zeal for his Father's house, Jesus sets about rectifying them. When queried about the authority of his actions Jesus speaks of his own death and resurrection - something which is not fully understood until much later.

With no concept of the resurrection, such passionate actions which led Jesus to the cross would undoubtedly seem foolish. St. Paul recalls that this was the case in the years forty or fifty AD, as people could not come to terms with the teaching of Christ risen, having been crucified, finding this foolishness, madness, something they cannot accept. Similarly, the community rule of life that is the ten commandments gives us is something that needs dedication and zeal to follow, something definitely needed by the first Israelites as their community was being created out of this law.

And perhaps very little has changed. Many people today will consider our worship and Church attendance foolish, our following of Church law madness, and our believing in the death and resurrection of Christ something, well, unbelievable. If that is case, in a sense, all well and good, because it shows that our passion for the faith, our zeal for God's house is visible and noticed,

however difficult that may be for ourselves – and it has been difficult the last year, but WE'RE STILL HERE!

Sometimes we have to stick our heads above the parapet and stand up for what we believe, we have to show to the world our true identity as Christians by what we do and say, how we live and act.

Following Jesus means acting like him - and today's Gospel is very much a Gospel of action rather than words. If today people were killed because of their passion for the faith, would we find ourselves destroyed out of zeal for the house of God? Let us use these five biblical quotes to inspire us:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength' (Deut. 6:5).

'Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart' (Ps. 119:2).

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding' (Prov.3:5).

'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart' (Jer.29:13).

'Even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning' (Joel 2:12).

*Implant within my heart, O God,
the fiery zeal of your Son, the Prophets, and the Saints.
Stir my slumbering soul,
that it might sing a song of passion and devotion,
filled with dancing joy and desire for you,
my divine and loving Friend.
May I, like your son Jesus,
be consumed with zeal for your house,
for life, for justice and for peace;
for all that I know in faith.
Fill me with zeal, O God.
Amen.*

And with great zeal let us 'Sing To The Mountains, Sing to the Sea.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hikl2dLRMCc>

Don't forget to book in for the Holy Week and Easter Services. That really is something we never thought we'd ever be saying. Then again, there are lots of things we'd never said until lockdown.

*Ooh, what time is Boris on? I must watch him.
If you didn't want me to cut your hair, you shouldn't have asked me.
I love a gin and tonic with the News – at One.
Time to change out of my pyjamas – into my evening pyjamas.
Tesco's have got loo roll – tell everyone on WhatsApp.*

Sainsbury's has got flour – I must get Eileen some (which I did).

Shall I bake some more banana bread?

Alexa, what day is it? (And I've explained this before, so no letters, please!)

Yey! Another Zoom meeting!

There really should be a 'Tipping Point' channel. (I'm campaigning for it)

Did you know there is not enough alcohol in gin to sanitise your hands?

And one evening I actually really did say to Bernard Melling *I've spent two hours on YouTube this afternoon watching videos of 'Phantom of the Opera' chandeliers falling from different productions around the world.* My dear people, it has come to this!

So don't forget to book in for the Easter services!

Enjoy this third Sunday in Lent, remembering that, even in the Lent, it is a day of Resurrection!

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.