

Tuesday March 9th, 2021, Tuesday of the Third Week in 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.

Great to see our children back at school yesterday. Let's hope we all stay as safe and well as possible. One step forward back to normal!

The emphasis today is on forgiving. Daniel 3:25.34-43 gives us the prayer of Azariah in the burning fiery furnace. Azariah, along with his friends, Hananiah and Mishael were thrown into a fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon, when they refuse to bow down to the king's image; *'Do not abandon us forever: we are despised because of our sins. May the contrite soul and the humble spirit be acceptable to you... Grant us deliverance worthy of your wonderful deeds, let your name win glory O Lord.'* Their prayer is heard, and they are unhurt. Even the king believes he sees a fourth person, an angel talking with them in the flames.

How many times must we forgive? 'Seventy-seven times' was the answer given by Jesus in Matthew 18:21-35. Then he gives us the frightening and very telling parable about the ungrateful steward, who receives forgiveness himself, but then refuses to offer that same forgiveness to others, and is eventually handed over to torturers until he pays his debt. *'And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from the heart.'* Remember, every day we say 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.'

*O Heavenly Father,
as you have forgiven me,
help me to forgive those who have sinned against me.
For we are all sinners and we all make mistakes.
Help me to let go of the anger, resentment, bitterness, and hurt
to forgive those who have hurt me.
I need your help, O Lord, for the hurts are great and sometimes it's hard to forgive.
Help me to fill my heart with love, because you first loved us.
Lead me to live a life of love and forgiveness, learning to see others through your eyes, Lord.
I leave my hurting heart at your feet, Lord
and ask for your help to heal my heart and lead me to forgiveness.
O Lord, help me to forgive those who have sinned against me or those I hold most dear.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Let us sing 'I Am The Bread Of Life' as we journey through Lent to the Resurrection.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CRMbh8ViUI>

The story of Azariah, Hananiah and Mishael, who were given the names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego by the King, and their time in the flames has been told in various ways. Benjamin Britten wrote a 'Church Parable' called 'The Burning Fiery Furnace' and you can see a BBC 1968 TV version here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYSYUpdvVo> filmed in the Parish Church in Orford where it was originally performed – I visited there a few years ago, and there's a beautiful memorial window to Britten there, based around scenes from the three 'Church Parables' he wrote. He is also buried in the cemetery there. If an hour of Britten doesn't excite you why don't you check out Louis Armstrong's 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego' song. It's very jolly.

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

Have a lovely day. Don't forget Mass and Stations of the Cross are on the YouTube, and we stream Stations of the Cross live on Friday at 7pm.

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.