

Thursday March 11th, 2021, Thursday 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.

Gosh it threw some rain down yesterday, and certainly the gale from the west woke me up early this morning, although it does look like today is going to slightly better. Here's Eileen's morning photo view from the prom! Don't forget there is plenty of space at our Thursday noonday Mass.

Today's readings focus on being at one with God. In Jeremiah 7:23-28 the prophet Jeremiah tells us that those who listen to God and follow his laws will be his people. But many refuse to listen and turn their backs on him, following the dictates of their own evil hearts. *'Sincerity is no more, it has vanished from their mouths.'*

Those who are close to God and who are with God can overcome everything, including the power of Satan. In Luke 11:14-23 reminds us how we should stay close to Christ and follow his ways, as 'He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.' Let us pray for unity with God, and with all Christians, especially as the Pandemic means that there will be no joint services this Holy Week:

*Dear Lord Jesus, You are our Prince of Peace
and You prayed for unity in the body of Christ,
that we may be united in love
just as You are united with the Father in love.
Give Your children the desire to love one another as You have loved us,
and let the world know that we are Your disciples by our love for one another.
Give us a hunger to live in union with each another,
and may we be united as one, in the bond of peace and fellowship, in the Spirit.
Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

'The Church's One Foundation Is Jesus Christ Her Lord' would make a suitable hymn for today:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jotNbcFelX4>

Today's Saint is Gemma Galgani, also known as the Flower of Lucca, an Italian mystic often referred to as the 'Daughter of the Passion,' She was born on March 12, 1878, in a small Italian town near Lucca. Throughout her life, Gemma was to be chosen with many mystical experiences and special graces. These were often misunderstood by others, causing ridicule. Gemma had an immense love for

the poor and helped them in any way she could. After her father's death, the 19-year-old Gemma became the mother-figure for her seven brothers and sisters. At this time, two young men proposed marriage to her. However, Gemma refused because she wanted silence, retirement, and more than ever, she desired to pray and speak only to God.

Gemma returned home and almost immediately became very ill with meningitis. Gemma prayed for help to the Venerable Passionist, Gabriel Possenti. Through his intercession, Gemma was miraculously cured. On June 8, 1899, Gemma had an internal warning that some unusual grace was to be granted to her. She felt pain and blood coming from her hands, feet and heart. These were the marks of the stigmata. Each Thursday evening, the marks would appear. Gemma wished to become a nun, but her poor health prevented her from being accepted. Gemma predicted that the Passionists would establish a monastery at Lucca; this came to pass two years after her death. She died on April 11, 1903, and was canonized on May 2, 1940, Pope Pius XII. Today, Gemma's relics remain at the Passionist monastery in Lucca. She is Patron Saint of Students, Pharmacists, against temptations, against the death of parents, and against tuberculosis.

*Pray for us, Saint Gemma,
that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.
O God, Who fashioned thy servant Saint Gemma into a likeness of Thy Crucified Son,
grant us through her intercession the favours that we humbly request,
health, peace and happiness, especially in this time of global pandemic,
and through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Thy Son,
may we be united with You for all eternity.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Lucca, incidentally, is a beautiful town which I visited from Rome one half term. Lucca was the birthplace of the great opera composer Giacomo Puccini, and I visited his house, which is full of memorabilia, including the piano at which he composed his operas. Here's the great Dame Kiri te Kanawa singing one of Puccini's greatest tunes, 'O Mio Babbino Caro.'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TQFYxrcz_Q

Don't forget that tomorrow night at 7pm we have a live streamed service of the Stations of the Cross on the YouTube.

Make it a great day!

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.