

Friday March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Friday 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.

And what a beautiful day we wake up to again – though as you can see there was plenty of spray as the waves crashed on to the prom this morning – in another photo which I did not take!

First of all a reminder that at 7pm tonight we have a live streamed service of the Stations of the Cross, based on Mary's thoughts throughout the Passion, with meditations written by Eileen, and the prayers written by me (due to copyright as YouTube is classed as broadcasting). Hope you can join us there.

Our first reading is the most gorgeous passage from the prophet Hosea which continues tomorrow:

*Israel, come back to the Lord your God...*

*I will love them with all my heart...*

*I will fall like dew on Israel*

*He shall bloom like the lily,*

*And thrust out roots like the poplar.*

Let's sing the hymn based on this passage of Scripture: 'Come Back To Me With All Your Heart.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ysk-5MkgrXw>

In Matthew 12:28-34 when a question about the most important commandments is put to Jesus he immediately replies, '*You must love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. The second is this: you must love your neighbour as yourself.*' I'm sure we all know these are the most important, and yet, in many ways, they are the teaching in which we most fall. Let us pray for a greater love of the Godhead, reflected in our actions towards all our neighbours.

*Lord, you have said that to truly love you*

*then I must also love my neighbour,*

*which can be difficult when we disagree or lifestyles clash.*

*Yet in overcoming those difficulties*

*it is possible to see the miracle that you love someone like me.*

*Teach us to love, Lord, as you have loved us*

*that this world might be a better neighbourhood in which to live and share.*

*May we look at others as if through your eyes,*

*less judging, more loving, and seeing them, like us,*

*as not perfect or finished but as a work in progress  
that will be completed in due time by your hands.  
Help us to love you and all our neighbours, near and far.  
Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Let's have a second hymn today: 'When I Needed A Neighbour, Were You There?' Well, were you?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fExR7eOhJO0>

As I said at the beginning, tonight we have our live streamed Stations of the Cross. Tradition holds that our Blessed Mother visited daily the scenes of our Lord's passion. After Constantine legalized Christianity in the year AD 313, this pathway, the Via Dolorosa, was marked with its important stations. St. Jerome (342-420), living in Bethlehem during the latter part of his life, attested to the crowds of pilgrims from various countries who visited these holy places and followed the Way of the Cross. In the fifth century, an interest developed in the Church to 'reproduce' the holy places in other areas so pilgrims who could not actually travel to the Holy Land could do so in a devotional, spiritual way in their hearts. William Wey, an English pilgrim, visited the Holy Land in 1458 and again in 1462, and is credited with the term 'stations'. He described the manner in which a pilgrim followed the steps of Christ. When the Moslem Turks blocked the access to the Holy Land, reproductions of the stations were erected at popular spiritual centres. Many of these stations were produced by renowned artists and are considered masterpieces today.

At this time, the number of stations varied. William Wey's account has 14 stations, but only 5 correspond to our own. Some versions included the house of Dives (the rich man in the Lazarus story), the city gate through which Christ passed, and the houses of Herod and Simon the Pharisee. In 1584, a spiritual book gave 12 stations which match those in our present version. This book was translated into several languages and circulated widely. In the 16th century, devotional books appeared especially in the Low Countries which had 14 stations with prayers for each one. In 1731 Pope Clement XII permitted stations to be erected in all churches and fixed the number at 14. In 1742, Pope Benedict XIV exhorted all priests to enrich their churches with the Way of the Cross, which must include 14 crosses and usually accompanied with pictures or images of each particular station. And that's how we've got our fourteen Stations of the Cross.

I hope you can join us live tonight, and the Stations will continue to be viewable throughout the rest of Lent.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Philip Flint, whose funeral I will be celebrating at Carleton, followed by his burial, at noon today. *May he rest in God's peace and love.*

Have you booked in for Easter yet?

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.