

Sunday March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021, The Fourth 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.

So how is Lent going? I always say Advent is two weeks too short and Lent is two weeks too long. However if Lent was only four weeks long it would mean that this Sunday was Palm Sunday, and I don't know about you, but I'm no way near ready for Easter.

Well, if we were feeling a bit jaded with our Lenten observations, and if our Lenten acts of penitence and giving up things had completely gone by the board. If our acts of charity haven't quite been what they should, and our extra prayer time never materialised, then today is a chance to start again, because this Sunday is Laetare Sunday, or, as it used to be known in England Refreshment Sunday. A chance to pick ourselves up, refresh ourselves, and continue to prepare for the great celebrations of the Paschal mystery in a couple of weeks' time.

In John 3:14-21 Jesus begins by telling us that the Son of Man must be lifted up. The reference to Moses refers to the time Moses lifted up a serpent in the desert, and everyone who was brave enough, or had enough faith, to gaze upon it, was cured of their illnesses. When Jesus says the Son of Man, he himself, must be lifted up, he is telling us that he is prepared to endure being lifted up on the cross to ensure our salvation. And secondly, Jesus is to be lifted up again, to be raised up, three days later, from the tomb on Easter Sunday. And as Jesus' words go on to say, all this comes about - the raising of Jesus on the cross and from the tomb - out of God's love for us. The whole of this Gospel passage, is a totally joyful song on the Incarnation, and the death and resurrection of Christ. It speaks only of God's love, and his desire to see us through the cross to the resurrection, through Good Friday to Easter Sunday, through the Lent of our lives, to the joyful Eastertide of eternal life.

Good, and refreshing to hear. And good to be reminded that the penitential acts which we practice during Lent, and our desire for reconciliation, are born, not out of a fear of condemnation, but to allow us to be conscious of the darkness of our lives and the world, and in recognising the darkness, thereby seek to live in the truth, as the Gospel says, and 'come out into the light,' not least our joyful service of light on Holy Saturday night. Yes, Lent is a dark penitential season, with no glorias or alleluias, and purple vestments and no flowers. But today we wear our Rose Vestment, remembering Lent, in fact, as the preface to the Eucharistic prayer baldly states, a joyful season. So, refreshed by the words

of the Gospel, let us together joyfully continue our Lenten journey, and prepare and look forward to celebrating in the wonderful light of Easter.

*Your Word reveals to us a simple truth,  
that sin entered this world  
through human folly  
in believing we could be like you,  
and permeated history  
through envy, selfishness and greed.  
Yet sin, which holds us tight  
within its grasp  
cannot resist a heart that is touched  
by your grace through Jesus Christ,  
cannot contend with Living Water  
pouring into hearts and souls.  
Your Word reveals to us a simple truth,  
that sin is defeated  
and we can become  
the people we were always meant to be,  
by your grace through Jesus Christ.  
Amen.*

And a happy Mothers Day to all our Mothers, on Earth and in Heaven. I thought this was rather moving, written by an American Pastor. It's called 'To Mothers Who Are'

*To the Mothers who are struggling, to those filled with incandescent joy.  
To the Mothers who are remembering children who have died,  
and pregnancies that miscarried.  
To the Mothers who decided other parents were the best choice for their babies,  
to the Mothers who adopted those children and loved them fiercely.  
To those experiencing frustration or desperation in infertility.  
To those who knew they never wanted children,  
and the ways they have contributed to our shared world.  
To those who mothered colleagues, mentees, neighbourhood children,  
and anyone who needed it.  
To those remembering Mothers no longer with us.  
To those moving forward from Mothers who did not show love,  
or hurt those they should have cared for.  
Today is a day to honour the unyielding love and care for others we call*

*'Motherhood,' wherever we have found it  
and in whatever ways we have found to cultivate it within ourselves.*

'O Mother Blest, Whom God Bestows On Sinners And On Just' might be an appropriate hymn for today. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nb7PchC-p04> and if you haven't watched Mary's Stations of the Cross on the YouTube, today would be a most fitting day to do so.

And finally a Big Happy Birthday to my sister Margaret over in Australia! And as they're eleven hours ahead in Australia she has already been celebrating! Many happies!

I hope you are making the best out of this mid-Lent Sunday.

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.