

Monday March 15th, 2021, Monday in the Fourth Week of 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.

Well hopefully we are all jolly and refreshed after Laetare Sunday and are ready to continue our Lenten Journeys - just two weeks to Palm Sunday. And what a beautiful start to the week.

And the readings today continue our joyful theme. Isaiah 65:17-21 tells us to 'Be glad and rejoice forever and ever for what I am creating.' And what is the Father creating? A new world, a world of joy and gladness, a world without illness or hardship - the wolf and the lamb will feed together. *'I shall rejoice over Jerusalem and exult my people.'* This is fulfilled with the coming of the Messiah and his healing ministry, which directly leads us to the Gospel.

Our Gospel is John 4:43-54. The first part of John's Gospel is seven 'signs' of Jesus' divinity, the first being the changing of water into wine at the wedding in Cana. The Gospel today recounts the second sign given by Jesus in Cana; a court official had a son who was ill in Capernaum and wanted Jesus to come and cure him. Jesus explains that he doesn't need to go and visit him to be cured. The man believed Jesus and returned home to find that his son had been cured at exactly the same time as Jesus had said *'Your son will live'*. All that was needed was faith, and faith brought him joy, *'and he and all his household believed.'* Let us thank God for our faith – and so much more:

Thank you for your amazing power and work in our lives,

thank you for your goodness and for your blessings over us.

Thank you that you are able to bring hope through even the toughest of times,

strengthening us for your purposes.

Thank you for your great love and care.

Thank you for your mercy and grace.

Thank you that you are always with us and will never leave us.

Thank you for your incredible sacrifice so that we might have freedom and life.

Forgive us for when we don't thank you enough,

for who you are, for all that you do, for all that you've given.

Help us to set our eyes and our hearts on you afresh.

Renew our spirits, fill us with your peace and joy.

We love you and we need you, this day and every day.

Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

How about a Taizé chant today? In all the messages I've written I don't think we've had one yet. 'In The Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful' would be very appropriate, following on from today's Gospel and prayer. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Yzr60p57h8> And here's a photo of me during a pilgrimage to Taizé thirty-six years ago - I'm the one at the bottom with a girl called Margaret on my knee!

I don't know if any of you have ever been to Taizé? The Taizé community is an ecumenical monastic order in Taizé, Saône-et-Loire, Burgundy, in France, with a strong devotion to peace and justice through prayer and meditation. The 100-strong community of Roman Catholic and Protestant monks is drawn from 30 countries across the world. It was founded in 1940 by Roger Louis Schutz-Marsauche (known as 'Brother Roger'). The 90-year-old monk sadly died in August 2005 after being stabbed during a prayer service. Each year tens of thousands of young pilgrims flock to the small village in central France to share in the community's way of life, and are encouraged to live out the Christian gospel in a spirit of joy, simplicity and reconciliation. The singing of distinctive and much-repeated prayer chants during candlelit prayer services is one of its trademarks. Taizé music highlights simple phrases, usually lines from the Psalms or other pieces of scripture, repeated or sung in canon. The repetition is designed to help meditation and prayer. Prayer chants are sung in many different languages and include those from the Eastern Orthodox tradition. It's a beautiful place and I have very happy memories of my week there. If you want to listen to more music from Taizé you can find some here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuPcxLjVxtg> This is a Taizé night prayer:

*Eternal God,
in whose perfect realm
no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness,
and no strength known but the strength of love:
so guide and inspire the work of those who
seek your kingdom
that all your people may find their security
in that love which casts out fear
and in the fellowship revealed to us
in Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Amen.*

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Shirley Cranfield, whose funeral I will be celebrating at Carleton this morning at 11am. *May she rest in the peace and love of Christ.*

Have a great day and a great week.

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.