

Saturday March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Saturday 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.

Hope you are having a great start to the weekend. I'm on a study here, which is actually taking place in our hall, so at least it is handy, and not a dreadful zoom meeting.

Jeremiah 11:18-20 is our First Reading today, *'I for my part was like a trustful lamb being led to the slaughterhouse, not knowing the schemes they were plotting against me... Let me see the vengeance you will take on them, for I have committed my cause to you.'* Jeremiah foreshadows the passion of Jesus.

In John 7:30-52 there is a lot of discussion among the chief priests and Pharisees about who Jesus is. Even the police are impressed by him, *'There has never been anybody who has spoken like him'*, much to the dismay of the Pharisees. Among the Pharisees, one sane voice is heard. Nicodemus reminds them that *'we cannot pass judgment on a man until we give him a hearing'*. Perhaps today we should say a prayer reminding us not to judge others:

*Lord Jesus I have come to You for help.*

*I am struggling with judging others.*

*Lord I want to ask You to redeem this.*

*Jesus teach me how to pray for others*

*when I realize they are struggling instead of judging them.*

*Help me to have a heart that shows compassion and mercy to people who hurting.*

*I acknowledge that You are the righteous judge over all creation.*

*I surrender to You.*

*I pray You would bless those whom I have judged*

*and that Your grace would be real to them. Amen.*

Nicodemus who we meet today in the Gospel is a fascinating character, sometimes called 'the secret disciple'. The Sanhedrin, the supreme council and highest court of justice of the Jews in Jerusalem, had wanted to condemn Jesus. Any member of the Sanhedrin who showed sympathy towards Jesus would have been considered by his colleagues as a traitor and an outcast. Yet Nicodemus did. Even before Jesus was tried, Saint John tells us that Nicodemus came to see Jesus, secretly and at night, to talk to him about what it means to see the kingdom of God (John 3:1-21). On this occasion

Nicodemus partly confessed his belief in Jesus, saying: *'We know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.'* Jesus tried to teach him about being born again by the Holy Spirit and by baptism. Saint John even says that it was to Nicodemus that our Lord said, *'God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.'* As we heard in today's Gospel Nicodemus spoke out on Jesus' behalf before the chief priests and the Pharisees, pointing out to them that the Law demanded the accused be given a hearing before judgment was passed (John 7:50- 52). Together with Saint Joseph of Arimathea, he had the privilege of laying Jesus' body in the tomb on Good Friday. He brought with him large quantities of costly myrrh and aloes to the tomb and with Joseph wrapped Jesus' body *'with spices in linen cloth'* (John 19:39-42).

*Merciful God,  
whose servant Nicodemus was a secret disciple of Christ,  
meeting him by night to avoid the wrath of the other members of the Sanhedrin,  
and eventually spoke out to that body to remind them that Jesus had a right to a hearing  
and with reverence and godly fear prepared the body of our Lord and Saviour for burial,  
and laid it in the tomb:  
Grant to us, your faithful people,  
grace and courage to love and serve Jesus  
with sincere devotion all the days of our life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.*

And let us sing 'I The Lord of Sea and Sky... Here I Am Lord.' Pledging to be disciples of Jesus in whatever we can. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk>

So Thursday and Friday last week had me on a zoom meeting for two and half hours each day, with many other priests, deacons and religious of the diocese, including the Bishop, with regards to safeguarding, with it now being a statutory course that we have to do – possibly every year, I'm not sure. It was quite exhausting, but hopefully has done its job. We began by saying this; *'A Prayer for the Vulnerable.'*

*Lord Jesus,  
We praise you for calling us to the service of others.  
We pray for a generosity of spirit to ensure the vulnerable are protected.  
We pray for a compassionate heart to that we will reach out to those wounded by abuse.  
We pray for courage and determination  
as we seek the safety of everyone in our Parish communities  
We dedicate ourselves to this work of service.  
Amen.*

Father Tom Butler will once again be celebrating the weekend Masses this week, enabling me to continue one of the aspects of further study I'm currently involved in (this is the last weekend of this course). And many thanks to him.

Here's a photo I took on the prom a couple of days ago, blessed by the sunset. Whatever you are doing, I hope you having a great weekend.

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.