

Monday March 23rd, 2021, Tuesday in the Fifth 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.

Another dull day, but good to see our trusty gardeners around the grounds - definitely a sign of spring!
And huge thanks to them for their hard work.

Today we turn to the Book of Numbers to help us understand the crucifixion. In Numbers 21:49 we see the wandering people rebelling towards God and Moses, at which God sends fiery, biting serpents among them. At God's instructions Moses makes a bronze serpent and puts it up on a staff, and *'if anyone was bitten by a serpent, he looked at the bronze serpent and lived.'*

In John 8:21-30 Jesus makes reference to this, as he is to be lifted up on the cross, and lifted up again on Easter Sunday. And all of us who look at the cross, and look upon with hope the resurrected Jesus, will also live. *'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he.'*

My Crucified Jesus,

wash me with your most Precious Blood.

Look upon me as the good thief, who hung on the cross next to You at Calvary.

*A sinner, paying for his crimes but recognizes your divinity
and begs for mercy and forgiveness and asks:*

'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'

Dear Lord, look upon me like the Good Thief

and I should be so lucky, full of Peace. Amen.

Let us sing 'When I Survey The Wondrous Cross,' very appropriate today.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDkuxE1cpdI>

Today I bring a Statement from the Presidency of the Bishops' Conference on the National Day of Reflection for COVID-19, Tuesday 23rd March 2021

We welcome the designation of Tuesday 23rd March as a National Day of Reflection to mark the anniversary of the first national lockdown with a minute's silence at midday and doorstep vigils of light at 8pm. Throughout this difficult year, so many have been inspired by prayer, so much effort sustained in prayer, in every place. So let us make the 23rd March truly a day of prayer.

We reflect in sorrow on all those who have died, whether family members, friends or

those unknown to us personally. We pray for them, asking our Father to welcome them into their heavenly home, the destiny for which God first gave us the gift of life. We reflect with compassion on all those who have suffered during this last year, whether through illness, stress, financial disaster or family tensions. We pray for their ongoing resilience, courage and capacity to forgive. We reflect with thanksgiving for the generosity, inventiveness, self-sacrifice and determination shown by so many in this most difficult of times. We pray for them, thanking God for their gifts and dedication, whether they are scientists, politicians, health workers, public servants of every kind, community leaders or steadfast family members and friends who continue to show such love and compassion. We reflect in hope that, as the pandemic is controlled and we open up our lives again, we will gather in the lessons we have learned and build our society into a better shape, more compassionate, less marked by inequalities, more responsive to needs and deprivation. We ask for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen us in this endeavour, whether we are focussing on overcoming family breakdowns, economic recovery, or building political consensus.

May Tuesday 23rd March be a great day of prayer that this pandemic comes to an end and that the gift of God's Holy Spirit will carry us all forward to a new and better life, both here and in the world to come.

Today's noonday mass will begin with a minute's silence, and I'll be at the door of the presbytery at 8pm this evening.

Dear God,

Be with us as we think about all that has changed this year,

And help us to trust that you are always with us.

Be close to us as we remember those who have died,

And help us to trust they are at peace with you.

Show us how to reach out to others with kindness and care,

So that hope shines out in every heart and home,

Through Christ or Lord. Amen

And in other news, even Tobias, the Presbytery cat, is totally bored with lockdown. That's one big yawn!

Do everything you can to have 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.