

Monday March 29th, 2021, Monday in Holy Week

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.

We can start the week by giving thanks for a beautiful Palm Sunday despite all the restrictions (and the weather!). If the rest of the week goes as well we will be truly, solemnly and beautifully celebrating our Easter Liturgies despite the pandemic all around us. It won't win! Remember to book in for Stations on Good Friday or Easter Sunday 11:30am. Mass.

As we go from Palm Sunday to Holy Thursday we reflect quietly on Jesus the Messiah, the suffering Servant-King. The readings we have from Isaiah for the next three days give us some of the characteristics of the great saviour. Isaiah 42:1-7,

*'Here is my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom my soul delights.
I have endowed him with my spirit,
that he may bring true justice to the nations.'*

Our Gospels this week tell of the incidents during the last days of Jesus before the Passover. Today, John 12:1-11, we hear that Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, anoints Jesus - in preparation for his death - in spite of the protests of Judas, who saw it as a waste of money. As Jesus tells Judas, *'Leave her alone; she had to keep this scent for the day of my burial. You have the poor with you always, you will not always have me.'* Let us be grateful for the presence of the Lord.

*Holy and Righteous Father,
I thank you for Jesus,
who is at your side and knows my heart, struggles, and world.
Thank you for your sacrifice, which saved me.
Thank you for your sustaining presence in our universe.
Thank you for your daily intercession.
Thank you, Jesus, for being God for me at the Father's side.
To the glorious, majestic, and holy God,
who sent Jesus as Saviour,
be glory, honour, and adoration forever and ever.
Amen.*

And for our hymn today let's sing 'Be Still For the Presence Of the Lord,' which Kath and Sarah sang so beautifully for us over Palm Sunday weekend. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJMaOxdu6B4>

Today's Gospel takes place at a meal given by Martha, Mary and Lazarus at Bethany, Lazarus having previously been raised from the dead by Jesus, and it is recorded that he was present at the table at this meal. Raising Lazarus from the dead was the last major miracle that Jesus performed. The Gospel concludes by reporting that the Jewish leaders decided that they must act decisively before the news of Lazarus' resurrection induced others to become disciples. This became the moment of decision for the Pharisees, for from this time they plotted how they could kill both Christ and Lazarus. Why Lazarus? Because he was literally living proof of the power over death that Jesus of Nazareth demonstrated before the eyes of people and '*many of the Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus*'. The name, Lazarus, in Greek is Lazaros, which comes from the Hebrew, Eleazar, meaning 'He whom God has helped'. There are several traditions about what happened to Lazarus. In one, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary go to France, where he became the first Bishop of Marseilles, before being martyred, beheaded in the persecutions of Domitian. It is sometimes said that after his resurrection Lazarus never smiled again, because of the time he spent with the Holy Souls in Purgatory when he was in the tomb for four days. His supposed relics were translated to Constantinople and numerous churches were built in his honour. He is one of the Patron Saints of the Sick, and we might like to seek his intercession during these covid times:

Saint Lazarus, patron of the injured and the ill.

I pray to you, that you might offer your divine protection

to the ones who suffer with pain and sickness.

You knew the pain of disease.

You protect and aid those who suffer.

Heal the afflicted, allow them to return to health with strength, peace, and joy.

Keep evil away from my body and the bodies of those I love.

I pray to you, Saint Lazarus, to grant us your protection and healing.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Please pray for the repose of the souls of Ian David Smith and Richard Reed, whose funerals I will be celebrating at Carleton this morning. *May they rest in the peace of Christ.*

In other news, I'd like to think Tobias, the Presbytery Cat is here contemplating the events of Holy Week, but I guess he's just awaiting his next treat. Enjoy the first day of this most special 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.