

Thursday April 1st, 2021, Maundy Thursday

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.

And so we begin our Sacred Triduum.

Although before we celebrate the Triduum we would normally have the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral in Lancaster this morning, where the Bishop would consecrate the Holy Oils used at our Sacramental Services, and the Priests of the Diocese would renew their priestly vows. Perhaps we could begin by saying a prayer for all our Priests.

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the gift of our priests.

Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments.

Help our priests to be strong in their vocation.

Set their souls on fire with love for your people.

Grant them the wisdom, understanding,

and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom.

Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel.

Allow them to experience joy in their ministry.

Help them to become instruments of your divine grace.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as our Eternal Priest.

Amen.

And then this evening we have the first of our Liturgies, the mass of the Lord's supper. At the Last Supper Jesus gathered his disciples together to share with them the meal that was to become the living sign of his great sacrifice for our salvation. As we gather in his memory this evening, we enter into that same sacrifice of love. Bells will be rung as we recite the Gloria (we can't sing it, sadly, due to covid regulations), after which they won't be rung again until the Gloria at the Holy Saturday Vigil. We then have our Liturgy of the Word. The first reading tonight sets the scene for the Passover supper that Jesus is to celebrate with his disciples. In Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14 we hear how the Passover is celebrated as a feast of remembrance, as it was on this day the Lord freed his people from slavery. *'This day is to be a day of remembrance for you, and you must celebrate it as a Feast in the Lord's honour. For all generations you are to declare it a day of festival for ever.'*

Our second reading, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, has the Institution of the Sacrament of the Eucharist as recorded by St. Paul. *'This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me... This cup is the new Covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.'* As we eat the bread and drink the cup in memory of the Lord, we proclaim his death. This, incidentally, is the oldest recording of the Sacrament, as St. Paul's letters were written before the four Gospels.

And for the Gospel we have the Last Supper as recorded in John 13:1-15 which doesn't focus on the Eucharist but instead on Jesus' most loving and humble act of servitude in washing the disciples' feet. *'Do you understand what I have done to you? If I, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.'*

Blessed are you, Lord God.

The basin and the towel are signs to us of your Son's servanthood.

You have made us partakers of Christ and of one another.

As we celebrate your act of service, give us grace

to count others more important than ourselves,

to love our enemies,

to make peace.

Send the Spirit of truth to keep alive in us

what Jesus taught and did,

that our words may carry his good news, and

that our lives may bear the shape of the cross

of the One who lives and reigns with You

and with the Holy Spirit,

One God, forever and ever. Amen.

The Eucharistic Hymn 'This Is My Body Broken For You' would make a most fitting hymn for today:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCuA_ixkZOW

Following the instructions of the Bishops of England and Wales there will be no washing of feet tonight, no Blessed Sacrament Procession, no stripping of the Altar, and no watching of the Blessed Sacrament until night prayer, as we would usually have done. However we have an awful lot more than we had last year, so let's be grateful for the way we are allowed to celebrate.

What shall I render to the Lord for all the favours and graces He has bestowed upon me?

What great blessings both known and unknown have I not received,

and to all this have I replied only with ingratitude.

But having Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, in my heart,

I can at this very moment, pay my whole debt of gratitude to almighty God.

*For this purpose I unite myself to that infinite act of thanksgiving
rising continually from Thy Sacred Heart.*

*Thou knowest well all the gifts I have received from Thy Divine goodness
ever since I was placed in the world and born again to the life of grace.*

*Do Thou, O Lord, render for me due thanks to the most Holy Trinity,
since in union with Thine Own giving of thanks do I desire to make my thanksgiving consist.*

And to that very baroque prayer I add a very baroque, and beautiful, painting of the Last Supper by Ghirlandaio, taken at the Museo San Marco in Florence.

I look forward to seeing many of you over the next few days, and once again, huge thanks to everyone who is making our services possible and beautiful.

Have a lovely 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.