

Friday April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, Friday in the Third Week of Easter

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.

A beautiful morning with the flag is flying outside Church for the Feast of St. George!

We have a very long reading from the Acts of the Apostles this morning, which relates the conversion of St. Paul on the Road to Damascus, as well as the aftermath, were in Acts 9:1-20 the disciple Ananias is directed by the Lord to visit Saul so as to ascertain the truthfulness of his conversion. The reading concludes with Paul beginning his ministry, *'After he had spent only a few days with the disciples in Damascus, he began preaching in the synagogues, 'Jesus is the Son of God.'*

*'The Jews started arguing with one another; "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"'* are the opening words of today's Gospel, John 6:52-59, as Jesus continues his Eucharistic theology, *'my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.'* Jesus speaks of the life that comes from receiving him, *'anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.'*

*Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Bread of Life for the world. Forgive us for elevating earthly appetites above devotion to you. Feed us with the knowledge of Christ so that we recognize our sin and gladly repent in his name.*

*Lord, we pray for those whose daily need for healthy food, clean water and proper shelter goes unmet, and for those misusing what they have in the vain pursuit of pleasure. Feed them, Lord, with the good things of life now and for eternity.*

*Have mercy, Lord, on those whose lives have been broken by coronavirus, human violence and crime. As you feed them through the hands of so many nurses, doctors, social and medical workers with hope and a new life, bless our brothers and sisters who minister to them in these prison-like situations.*

*Merciful Father, you heard the prayers of your people in the wilderness and fed them with bread from heaven despite their sin. Graciously hear us today and feed us too with the Bread of Life from heaven, even as our Lord Jesus Christ who fed the multitudes with bread, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

And so we have the Feast of St. George, Patron saint of England. We are always taught that he was a knight who slayed dragons but there is more to the historical figure. According to legend, St George

was a Roman soldier born in what is now modern-day Turkey in around 280AD and died around 303AD. Very little is known about his early life but it is believed he was born to a wealthy Christian noble family. When he grew up he became a soldier and joined the retinue of Emperor Diocletian. In 303AD Diocletian, as part of a crackdown on the growing influence of the Christian community, ordered that all Christian soldiers in the army should be expelled and all Roman soldiers be forced to make the traditional pagan sacrifice. St George refused and denounced the edict in front of his fellow soldiers, declaring he was a Christian. Diocletian initially tried to convert him with offers of wealth and land but when he refused he was beheaded on 23 April 303. So what does he have to do with dragons?

The myth of St George slaying a dragon originally appeared in stories told by the mediaeval Eastern Orthodox Church which were brought back to Europe by the Crusaders in the 10th and 11th centuries. According to one story, a town in Libya had a small lake with a plague-infected dragon living in it. The townspeople were gradually being killed by the dragon and started feeding it two sheep a day to appease it. When they ran out of sheep the king devised a lottery system to feed it local children. One day his own daughter was chosen and as she was being led out to the lake St George happened to ride past. He reportedly offered to slay the dragon if the people converted to Christianity. They all did, and the king later built a church where the dragon died. King Edward III made St George the country's official saint just after he came to the throne in 1327.

So how about 'I Vow To Thee Me Country' for our hymn today – with some touching shots of the Duke of Edinburgh in the accompanying video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvouc8Qs\\_MI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvouc8Qs_MI)

Today is also Shakespeare Day, as it is his birthday, so my Prom Walking Music today definitely has to be something based on one of his plays. But which one, as there's quite a choice. 'West Side Story', based on 'Romeo and Juliet'; 'All Shook Up', which uses Elvis songs to retell 'Twelfth Night'; 'Kiss Me, Kate' based on 'Taming of the Shrew'; 'Play On!' which uses Duke Ellington songs to retell 'Twelfth Night'; 'The Boys from Syracuse' based on 'The Comedy of Errors'; 'Rockabye Hamlet', which should be banned; 'The Donkey Show' based on 'Midsummer Night's Dream'; 'Return to the Forbidden Planet' based on 'The Tempest'; 'Two Gentlemen of Verona'; 'Do Ya Own Thing' based on 'The Comedy of Errors', or 'Romeo et Juliette', a French Rock opera. Any other suggestions?

Odds bodikins, 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.