

Tuesday April 27th, 2021, Tuesday in the Fourth 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.

Bit of rain in the night, but otherwise a lovely day to wake up to again (even if it was a bit chilly when I opened the Church).

Quite an important first reading this morning. Acts 11:19-26 tells us how after the martyrdom of Stephen the Apostles scattered to various parts of Greece. Although Stephen had travelled, he had only preached to Jews, where as after his death the disciples started to convert Pagans in various parts of Greece They were first called Christians at Antioch. We also see Saul, after his conversion, receiving instruction and training from Barnabus. And most significantly, *'It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.'*

Lord Jesus,

Thank you for allowing me to be a member of your family

And take upon your name 'Christian'.

Thank You for this great honour, which is my strength and stay.

*Help me always to rejoice in Your joy and to remain in Your love,
so that my joy might be full*

*and so that Your joy may well up in my heart and overflow to others,
to the glory of Your name, and the glory of the name 'Christian'.*

Amen.

And as we build our lives on the name 'Christian' how about 'Christ Is Made Our Sure Foundation'?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bC0tgG_bIE

In his Pastoral Letter at the weekend the Bishop spoke of the need to listen to the voice of the Lord. Only time listening to Jesus will allow you to recognise your true calling, your vocation. It was because Mary Magdalene had spent time listening to the Lord, rather than hustling and bustling in the kitchen that she recognised the words of the voice of Jesus when he called her name at the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. John 10:22-30 tells us, *'The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me.'* This prayer is based on today's Gospel:

Dear Lord,

*I thank You for the works that You have done in Your Father's name
for they bear witness of You.*

*I believe in You because I am Your sheep, You are my good shepherd.
I heard Your voice, know You, and follow You.
Thank You for the eternal life that You have promised to Your sheep.
Lord, as I contemplate you as my Good Shepherd,
I will give thanks because in You I will never perish! No one will snatch me from Your hand.
You Father, who has given me to You, is greater than them all, Amen.*

Ok no more jokes about shepherds! But I did think I should share some fascinating facts about sheep with you. Did you know that Jewish sheep come of age at their Baamitzvah? Did you know that a sheep's favourite composer is Baach (blame Eileen for that one). Did you know there is a species of dancing sheep: the Lambada? Did you know the Queen has her own Regiment of Sheep: The Ewemen of the Guard? And even the sheep had to stay at home because of Covid during Flockdown. You got it, I'll get my coat.

After yesterday's beautiful picture of the cherry blossom in the car park, here's the cherry blossom in the front garden, along with three of the team of our indefatigable gardeners, who keeping the grounds looking so beautiful for us throughout the year. God bless them in the ministry. And if you'd like to join them just turn up on a Tuesday morning – tea and biscuits provided! Why not pray this gardener's prayer:

*Help us, Oh God, to be ever mindful of the beauties around us.
May we grow with our flowers in gentleness, patience, courage, laughter and religion.
As we turn the brown soil and plant our seed, may we learn faith
faith in the goodness of the earth, the clemency of the sun, the fullness of the clouds.
May we be grateful for the privilege of being co-workers with God
in the creation of even one tiny flower;
And grant that we may know the great joy that comes from sharing with others.*

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.