

Tuesday May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021, The Feast of the English Martyrs

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.

Well, gosh, the rain eventually hit yesterday afternoon, but then it turned into a lovely evening! Hey ho. Bit breezy this morning, and that's an understatement, but the forecaste is lovely for tomorrow so let's wait and see!

We have another Feast day today, but I'll just mention what's happening in the weekday cycle of readings, so we get the plot! The Jews, who were angry with Paul in the cities he had already visited, now tried to stone him. Acts 14:19-28 tells us that Paul and Barnabas went back to Antioch, encouraging their people to remain firm in their faith. Whist in John 14:27-31 Jesus bequeaths a special peace to his disciples, '*my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give.*' So they must not let their hearts be troubled; He is not going to desert them but go to his Father.

So today we celebrate the Feast of The Beatified Martyrs of England and Wales. The 40 martyrs canonised under Paul VI in 1973, previously celebrated on October 25, are celebrated with the 85 beatified Martyrs of the Reformation and the other martyrs of the 16th and 17th century, lay and religious, men and women, executed between 1535 and 1679 for treason and related offences under various laws enacted by Parliament during the English Reformation. The individuals range from Carthusian monks who in 1535 declined to accept Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy, to seminary priests who were caught up in the alleged 'Popish Plot' against Charles II in 1679. Many were sentenced to death at show trials, or with no trial at all. The feast of the English Martyrs is celebrated on this day because 4<sup>th</sup> May 1535 is the date when the first martyrs of the Protestant Reformation were hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn, London, for opposing the Act of Succession through which the King asserted himself as 'the only Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England'.

*Glorious English Martyrs, you had the courage to witness for Christ before men without counting the cost. Help us to have this same courage in our day.*

*Glorious English Martyrs, you had a profound love of truth, and would not deny it even though this meant suffering and death. Give us the same love of truth, and zeal for the faith, that you had.*

*Glorious English Martyrs, at the heart of all you did and endured was the love of God. Help us to know this love, and to pass it to our neighbour.*

*Glorious English Martyrs, you readily forgave those who persecuted you, and offered your sufferings for their conversion. Intercede for us to have something of the same spirit in the face of injustice or persecution.*

*Glorious English Martyrs, you persevered in your witness to the end, and joyfully accepted the sufferings that opened to you the Kingdom. Intercede for us, and those who are near to death, or undergoing a trial of faith, that we too may have the grace of final perseverance.*

*Amen.*

Our readings for this Feast day are the account in Acts 7:55-60 of the martyrdom of St. Stephen, the first martyr, whose final words as they stone him are, *'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit... Lord, do not hold this sin against them,'* whilst in the Gospel, Matthew 10:17-20 Jesus warns the Apostles of the trials and martyrdoms they will face, but that they are not to worry about what to say in their defence as, *'it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of the father will be speaking in you.'*

'Faith of our Fathers' would be a great hymn to sing today, written in 1848 Frederick William Faber. Writing hymns was the work and mission of Faber. He wrote hymns that he believed would assist his fellow Christians with their faith and life. He penned roughly 150 such hymns in his lifetime and in the opinion of many, his greatest creation was 'Faith of Our Fathers.' This is a hymn that recognizes the importance of Catholic martyrs in England who had been killed since the time of Henry VIII, who established the Church of England in the mid-16th century. Incidentally, Faber was not averse to slightly editing his hymns to make them more widely acceptable. *'Faith of our Fathers, Mary's prayers...'* was changed to *'Faith of our fathers, good men's prayers...'* for Anglican hymnals, while there are several changes for the Irish version of the hymn:

*Faith of our fathers! living still,*

- In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword;  
Oh, Ireland's hearts beat high with joy*

- Whene'er we hear that glorious word.*

*Faith of our Fathers! guile and force*

- To do thee bitter wrong unite;  
But Erin's saints shall fight for us,*

- And keep undimm'd thy blessed light.*

So let's sing the hymn. This isn't the greatest of versions, but it at least uses the tune that we usually used called 'Sawston' whereas most of the YouTube videos I found uses the tune 'St. Catherine' to which we sing 'O Bread of Heaven.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvnCNpDq430>

- 

Further to Sunday's picture of Bispham Lodge Caravan Park, a parishioner sent me a link to another picture taken at the same time, which I think makes it more clear that the site is further towards Little

Bispham? Any memories, or better still old photographs, please let me know! In fact, any old photos of the parish or Bispham you would like me share, do email them in!

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Denise Meakin whose funeral I will be celebrating at Carleton this afternoon. *May she rest in the peace and joy of Christ.*

Have a breeze of a 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.