

Wednesday May 5th, 2021, Wednesday in the Fifth Week of Eastertide

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.

Good morning, and after the last two somewhat miserable days, it's looking much more Spring like today, so let's hope it keeps up!

Hugely important couple of days with regard to our weekday readings today and tomorrow, as we read about the first Council of Jerusalem. There's already been a discussion about whether you had to become a Jew before you became a Christian, but the thorny topic pops up again in Acts 15:1-6, and as the arguments get rather heated it is decided that Paul and Barnabus should *'go up to Jerusalem and the discuss the matters with the Apostles and elders.'* As they travel along they give lots of news about how many Pagans had been converted, but when they get to Jerusalem they discover that many Pharisees have been converted, and they are still somewhat stuck in their traditionalist ways, and insist that pagans should be circumcised and instructed to keep the law of Moses. So the first Council of Jerusalem begins to discuss the matter.

Today's gospel, John 15:1-8 should be familiar to us, as it was actually last Sunday's Gospel (this is another reason why the Lent and Eastertide readings are not my favourites – there is a lot of repetition and overlapping). Still, the message is hugely important, *'I am the vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.'* Branches that do not produce fruit will cut off, collected, and thrown on the fire. So, as disciples we have to bear fruit, produce good works for the kingdom, and *'It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples.'* Here Jesus is making 'one who bears good fruit' part of the definition of being a disciple. So, we can truly call ourselves disciples?

Lord, it is your desire for everyone to know you. Help me to be a part of that. Help me to be a good disciple for your kingdom and give me the grace to disciple others. Help me to advance your kingdom every day.

Lord, reveal to me my weaknesses and give me the strength to grow in these areas so that I am a better example to those that I disciple. Send me out into my community, my country, and all over the world to disciple others and show them how to grow near to you.

Help me to remember that I am your tool for accomplishing your plan. You are the one who is working in their lives and drawing them to yourself.

Help me to commission those that I am discipling to follow your calling on their lives. Help me to prepare them to go out and make disciples themselves so that your church can be grown around the globe.

God, prepare the hearts of those who will become your disciples to have ears to hear and understand, and that they would become strong followers of you.

I love you Lord, help me to show others how to love you too. Amen.

And whilst this him refers to the calling of the prophet Hosea, it is equally suitable for those - each of us - called to be disciples of Christ, 'Here I Am, Lord'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yv1arxTxy20>

Incidentally, while the word Apostles means 'messenger' coming from ecclesiastical Latin via Greek 'apostolos', the word 'disciple' comes from the Latin 'discipulus' meaning 'learner' or 'student.' This is a prayer by St. Thomas Aquinas for Students, but it applies equally to ourselves as 'Students of Christ':

*Creator of all things, true source of light and wisdom, origin of all being,
graciously let a ray of your light penetrate the darkness of my understanding.*

*Take from me the double darkness in which I have been born,
an obscurity of sin and ignorance.*

*Give me a keen understanding, a retentive memory,
and the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally.*

*Grant me the talent of being exact in my explanations
and the ability to express myself with thoroughness and charm.*

Point out the beginning, direct the progress, and help in the completion.

I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

So finally I was able to get a haircut – and here is Ginger Jason at Gazz's Chop Shop up on Redbank Road doing the honours for me. He even recorded the children's prayer for me, in which we sought the intercession of the three Saints of hairdressing: St. Martin de Porres (who cut the hair of the monks in his Abbey in Peru), St. Mary Magdalene (who wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair), and St. Agnes of Rome (who received a miraculous growth of hair which covered her nakedness when the barbarians were persecuting Rome). And at least the Barber's being open is another step toward the 'new normality'. Bravo to that!

Make the most of this sunny day yourselves (even if I am feeling it rather chilly with all my hair cut off!).

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.