

Wednesday May 19th, 2021, Wednesday in the Seventh 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.

What a glorious morning! Jesus has risen, ascended, and we wait the birthday of the Church at Pentecost!

Today's readings give us the continuation of Paul's speech to the Ephesians, as well as the continuation of Jesus' wonderful prayer for his disciples – and for you and me.

In Acts 20:28-38, Paul addresses the leaders of community at Ephesus, asking them to look after *'the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you the overseers,'* warning them of the wolves that will attack the flock with *'a travesty of the truth.'* He then changes subject and goes on the subject of charity, asking him to look after the weak and the needy, reminding them that, *'There is more happiness in giving than receiving,'* before praying with them, receiving their kiss of peace, and returning to his ship to set sail for his next adventure.

*Giving God,
we receive so much from you,
and therefore have much to give.
Help us to share in the blessings of giving
as well as the happiness of receiving,
that your love may be more widely shared. through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Father, teach me to be generous;
teach me to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labour and not to seek reward,
except that of knowing that I do your will.
Amen.*

Just as Paul asked the Elders to take care of their flock, so Jesus asks his Heavenly Father to look after the disciples. He speaks of how he has been watching over them, but as the disciples come to the fullness of the truth they will no more belong to this world, and so Jesus prays, *'protect them from the*

evil one. ' There are further intimations of the coming of the Spirit of Truth as Jesus says, *'for their sake I consecrate myself, so that they too may be consecrated in truth.'*

*Grant, O Lord, Thy protection,
And in protection, strength,
And in strength, understanding,
And in understanding, knowledge,
And in knowledge, the knowledge of justice,
And in the knowledge of justice, the love of it,
And in the love of it, the love of all existences,
And in that love, the love of spirit and all creation. Amen.*

'Do Not Be Afraid' would seem to be a good hymn to sing after that lovely prayer. And it's always a lovely hymn. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTTPevymr7I>

And today we have a Feast for the Churches of England and Wales, that of St. Dunstan. Dunstan was born in 909 and led an extraordinary life. Cast into a cesspit by jealous members of the royal court, he became a hermit at Glastonbury - a special place of pilgrimage even then - spending his days playing his harp and, on one occasion, resisting the temptation of the Devil by holding his nose with a pair of tongs! An incredibly skilled man, Dunstan was adept as an artist and musician. He was also one of the key figures in the development of England, serving no less than seven kings (Athelstan, Edmund I, Eadred, Eadwig, Edgar the Peaceable, Edward the Martyr and, briefly, Aethelraed the Unready) as advisor in matters of church and state. He was effectively the equivalent of a Prime Minister, all but running the country at times as a succession of inexperienced kings came and went, and went on to become the Archbishop of Canterbury. He died in 988, and is the patron saint of gold and silversmiths as well as that of bell ringing. This the translation of a Latin Hymn that was written for St. Dunstan in the eleventh century. It makes a great Prayer for England, even today:

Hail Dunstan, star and shining adornment of bishops, true light of the English nation and leader preceding it on its path to God.

You are the greatest hope of your people, and also an innermost sweetness, breathing the honey-sweet fragrance of life-giving balms.

In you, Father, we trust, we to whom nothing is more pleasing than you are. To you we stretch out our hands, to you we pour out our prayers.

Your sheep, holy shepherd, are oppressed by troubles on all sides. See how we Christians are being slaughtered by the swords of the pagan nation!

Offer, O priest, the sacrifice to Christ of most welcome prayers, so that by them he may be appeased and release us from the iron fetters of our transgressions.

Through them may heathen peoples and harmful diseases depart from the lands of the English and the sons of the church.

Through you may the Father, our only hope, through you may the Son, our only peace, and the Spirit, our only light, be with us forever. Amen.

So yesterday I continued the ‘Dickens’ theme and listened to ‘Two Cities’ as I walked to Cleveleys. There have been various versions of ‘A Tale of Two Cities’ over the years, but the one I listened to was the 1969 version by Jeff Wayne (who went on to write the incredible ‘War of the Worlds’). Referring to the opening lines of the book, ‘It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,’ the composer himself said *‘It was the best of times - when we finally opened, and it was the worst of times - when the reviews came in. While the remaining run played to virtually sold-out audiences, ‘Notice’ from the theatre owners had already condemned ‘Two Cities’ to the guillotine.’* It didn’t last long. Incidentally, the two Cities in the title refer to London and Paris – always useful in quizzes, as is knowing that classic opening line. At least they didn’t add an exclamation mark to the title. Today it’s ‘Smike!’ I’ll report back tomorrow!

And today it is ‘throwback Wednesday’ with some pictures from Paul around the parish grounds before the Parish Hall was built. I didn’t even recognise the presbytery! Paul writes, *‘Three pictures of how things looked before the new church hall was built. The sea stone walls were once common in the area and the parish church still have them. Note how the Red Lion has not been extended at this stage.’* Cheers, Paul.

Please for the repose of the soul of Teresa Graysham, whose funeral I will celebrate at Lytham this afternoon. *May she rest in the peace and love of Christ.*

Make today the best of times!

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.