

Thursday May 20th, 2021, Thursday 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.

It may be somewhat damp outside, but don't let that dampen our spirits!

So today we catch up with Paul as he returns to Jerusalem, with many people trying to kill him, and once again, he get's arrested. Acts 22:30, 23:6-11 tells us that in front of the court of law, the Sanhedrin, Paul is given the opportunity of explaining what he was doing. He recounts the story of his conversion. He divides the Sadducees and the Pharisees - the Sadducees do not believe in the Resurrection so they will not accept that Jesus could rise. So there is a great row and Paul has to be rescued. The Lord tells him that he must also bear similar witness in Rome.

Jesus continues his prayer, but this time his prayers move beyond praying for the disciples. Some of his Last Words at his Last Supper, in John 17:2-26, are a prayer of us, for me and you. *'I pray for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one as you are in me and I am in you.'* This is a prayer that we should all work together in unity – and it is particularly addressed to the Leaders of Nations – and a united response to the events over the last eighteen months has definitely what we have needed, but sadly does not always seem to have materialised.

Dear God, we pray for our churches, our workplaces, our schools, and our communities.

We ask for your help in being a light in every place you've given us to walk. Give us care and wisdom as we live and work with one another. Help us to look to another's needs before our own, and to always be ready to serve those around us by the power of your love within us. Even in every dark and broken place, for the times we feel like we're barely making it through, give us your joy Lord, your grace, and the powerful presence of your peace.

We pray for all those in authority, for every leader of our nation, that you would give them your wisdom and discernment as they lead. We pray that their hearts would be directed first to you, that they would recognize where their true help and strength come from. We ask that you guard their coming and going, that you would be their refuge and their peace. We pray that you would surround every leader with wise counsel, that they would be humble and kind, patient and loving through their actions and words. We pray that their faith in you would be unwavering, strong, resolute, and firm.

We pray for unity among your faiths. May we all echo the great prayer of your Son, 'May they all be one,' one Father, as you are one, with your Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit; one God, three persons, united in love, through whom, we make this prayer.

Amen.

‘Thy Hand O God has Guided’ is a great Christian unity prayer, and echoes Christ prayer that we should all be one, ‘One Church, One Faith, one Lord.’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IaI3cRtXqRw>

Today we remember St. Bernadine of Siena. Bernardine, born in 1380 was considered to be the greatest preacher of his time, journeying across Italy, calming strife-torn cities, attacking the paganism he found rampant, and attracting crowds of 30,000, despite having a very weak and hoarse voice, miraculously improved later because of his devotion to Mary. When he was 20, the plague was at its height in his hometown of Siena. Bernardine offered to run the hospital and, with the help of other young men, nursed patients there for four months. He escaped the plague, but was so exhausted that a fever confined him for several months. At 22, he entered the Franciscan Order and was ordained two years later. For almost a dozen years he lived in solitude and prayer, but his gifts ultimately caused him to be sent to preach. He always travelled on foot, sometimes speaking for hours in one place, then doing the same in another town.

Especially known for his devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, Bernardine devised the famous IHS symbol, the first three letters of the name of Jesus in Greek - in Gothic letters on a blazing sun. The devotion spread, and the symbol began to appear in churches, homes and public buildings. After running various Franciscan communities - and attracting many vocations - He returned to preaching the last two years of his life, dying while traveling, in 1444. He is the Patron Saint of: Respiratory Illnesses, Advertising, Gambling, Italy and Public Relations. This is St. Bernadine’s own prayer to the Holy Name of Jesus.

Jesus, Name full of glory, grace, love and strength!

You are the refuge of those who repent,

our banner of warfare in this life,

the medicine of souls,

the comfort of those who mourn,

the delight of those who believe,

the light of those who preach the true faith,

the wages of those who toil,

the healing of the sick.

To you our devotion aspires; by you our prayers are received;

we delight in contemplating you.

O Name of Jesus, you are the glory of all the saints for eternity. Amen.

How about singing ‘At The Name of Jesus’ in response to that beautiful prayer?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI2rKRCWmOU>

On this feast of Bernadine of Siena, If I don't send a throwback photo or two of my visits to Siena many years ago when I was in Rome, no doubt my mate Ed will forward one to send, as he did when I didn't post one for the Feast of St. Catherine of Siena earlier this month. So here's a couple of that amazing city that I took many, many moons ago.

Oh, and yesterday's walk was accompanied by 'Smike!' which tells of the time that Nicholas Nickleby spent as a schoolmaster at the hideous 'Dootheboy's Hall' school. It's not a bad listen, being a kind of school musical from the mid-seventies, about a modern school putting on a production of 'Nicholas Nickleby', and I first heard it then in a BBC TV version. It was written by Simon May who for a time in the Eighties was the BBC's in-house theme tune composer, writing the theme tunes for EastEnders, Howard's Way, and Eldorado (remember that disaster?) among others. There's no CD but I was able to listen to it through the YouTube, so you might want to check it out <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOs2RyPa3ls> Tomorrow, 'Pickwick.' And no exclamation mark.

As they sing in 'Smike!' (incessantly) *'Don't let life get you down, even though the world might let you down...'* I think that's a cheery sentiment? Have a good Thursday! And maybe I'll see you at noonday Mass!

Please for the repose of the soul of Margaret Fox, whose funeral I will celebrate at Carleton this morning. *May she rest in the peace and love of Christ.*

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.