

Friday May 21st, 2021, Friday 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.

And the final weekend of Eastertide awaits us, the glorious Feast of Pentecost. Till then, a couple of other stories are reaching their conclusion...

There is an awful lot going on for Paul in today's extract from Acts of the Apostles 25:13-21. The Jews continue to conspire against Paul, and he is moved to Caesarea and later appeals his case to Rome. Felix, the Roman governor, told king Agrippa about Paul, and about the dispute he has had with the Jews, and told him how determined he was to get him to Rome. In this way Paul would fulfil the prophecy that he must bear witness to Jesus in the capital city. So Rome beckons Paul as we move towards the end of his journeying.

And we move to the end of John's Gospel. Our penultimate extract gives us the resurrection of appearance of Jesus to Peter and the other disciples, with Peter's threefold denial of Christ being confronted somewhat obliquely, with Jesus asking Peter three times, 'Do you love me?' Peter, three times, replies that he does indeed love Jesus, and is giving the instructions to 'Feed my sheep,' before going on to refer to Peter's future martyrdom. *'After this he said "Follow me"'*.

Merciful God,

You call us to follow you;

to turn away from our own selfish interests,

and to take up our cross and follow after You,

even if the path is difficult to see,

or is heading in a direction we would never have chosen for ourselves.

Forgive us for being so quick to question

and so hesitant to follow.

Help us to see with the eyes of faith,

rather than from our own human point of view.

Teach us to follow without fear,

knowing that You are always with us,

leading the way.

Amen.

What else could sing other than 'Follow Me, Follow Me.' Catch your breath, as this is a very speedy version! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lry-SRbAxUA>

Today we remember Father Christopher Magallanes Jara (1869-1927) and twenty four companions, all of whom are martyrs. Born in Totaltiche, Jalisco, in the archdiocese of Guadalajara, Mexico, to a farming family, Christopher worked as a shepherd in his youth. He entered the seminary at the age of nineteen and became parish priest in his native parish. He was eager to spread the Gospel. He founded schools, a newspaper, catechetical centres for children and adults, carpentry shops, an electric plant to power the mills and also helped set up agricultural co-ops. When the anti-Church government closed down the seminaries, Father Christopher gathered displaced seminarians, and started his own seminary, which was quickly suppressed. He formed another, and another, and when they were all closed, the seminarians conducted classes in private homes. Christopher wrote and preached against armed rebellion, but was falsely accused of promoting the Cristero Guerrilla revolt. Arrested on 21st May 1927 while en route to celebrate Mass, he was executed without a trial four days later. He gave away his last remaining possessions to his executioners, absolved them, and turned to his companion Fr Augustine Caloca before he was shot, said: 'Be at peace, my son; just a minute and then we're in heaven' who responded, 'We have lived for God and in him we die.' In 2000, Pope Saint John Paul II canonised Christopher and his Companions.

*Almighty and eternal God,
who made the Priest Saint Christopher Magallanes and his companions
faithful to Christ the King even to the point of martyrdom,
grant us, through their intercession,
that, persevering in confession of the true faith,
we may always hold fast to the commandments of your love.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

So yesterday, after having spent an hour with Year Three in class (suitably social distanced still), followed by a meeting in Blackpool, I walked back from Town listening to yesterday's Dickens of a Show the 1963 'Pickwick' based on, you guessed, 'Pickwick Papers' with music by Cyril Ornadel and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse (who also wrote the words to 'Goldfinger' 'You Only Live Twice', all the songs in 'Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory' - the Gene Wilder movie, not the dreadful modern one with Johnny Depp - and a lot more songs that you will know). Harry Secombe sang in many productions of this show around the world, belting out 'If I Ruled The World' - as he is here with the Broadway Cast <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfbY2VITqxo> Incidentally, I met Leslie Bricusse after seeing his 'Goodbye, Mister Chips,' and he could not have been a nicer guy, seemingly surprised

that someone would turn up with the sheet music of one of his songs and ask for his autograph. An absolute gentlemen.

Earlier this week I had lunch in a café! Yes, indoors, with a roof and everything! Whoever thought such words would have been worthy of recording? I met Fr. Philip Newbold for lunch (for those who you who don't know him, he is a retired priest from the Birmingham Diocese, living in Freckleton, who often supplies here at SB's), who has had a very quiet lockdown, and is looking forward to getting back to work, and supplying in parishes up and down the diocese, so hopefully we will see him soon here at SBs. He sends his best wishes to you all, and hopes to join us at Saint Bernadette's for a service soon. And the Scampi and Chips was pretty good, too!

Today the children and teachers finish for their two week half term holiday. We wish them a restful and enjoyable couple of weeks, and look forward to a great last half term before the summer!

So, what would *you* do if you ruled the world? Enjoy this last day of the week.

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.