

Sunday May 30th, 2021, The Feast of the Holy Trinity

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 I hope you are enjoying the Bank Holiday Weekend and this lovely sunny morning.

I know that there are some people reading this will have been on holiday or pilgrimage to Rome, the Eternal city. As you know I had the privilege of six years, training for their priesthood, during which I got to know that city as my home, and it was always great to receive guests and pilgrims and take them round the great and famous sights; the Coliseum, the Trevi Fountain, the Vatican City, of course, the famous Spanish Steps. The Spanish Steps, in Piazza dell' Spagna are in the heart of Rome – at its feet is the famous Via Condotti, one of the most famous fashion shopping streets in the world, the people meet and greet there, making passeggiata, as the Italians say, just walking round, seeing and being seen. And at the top of the great flight of steps there is a Church. This Church looks out right over the whole of Rome taking in shopping and business, districts, palaces and slums, ancient pagan temples, and far off in the distant, the great Dome of St. Peter's. It's as if this church is standing over above the whole of Rome, looking down upon its many facets, and looking down and protecting everyone in that eternal city. And the Church is called, Il Trinitate dei Monti, the Trinity on the Mountain. And a Trinity on the Mountain caring for the people of God neatly encapsulates the readings for this great feast.

In the first, Old Testament reading, which takes place on a Mountain, for the first time – an extraordinary moment – for the first time, God is revealed not as some omnipotent jealous deity, but as a loving Father of mercy and compassion, whose commandments are commandments of love. Keep these commandments and you shall live and prosper, he tells his people. In the second reading, we move from the Father, to the Spirit, who, St. Paul reminds us, moves us, gives us the dynamism, the courage, the awe and reverence, gives us all those great gifts of the Holy Spirit which enable us to fulfil God's commandments of love, which truly make us his Children.

And in the Gospel, we have the Son, through whom the love of God was poured into our hearts. Through his years of teaching, Jesus revealed in full the true face of God. In the 'Sermon on the Mount', on the mountain of the Transfiguration, on the mount of Calvary, Jesus revealed to us the mystery of his Father. Finally, on another mountain in Galilee, Jesus promised his Spirit to his followers and commissioned them to preach to the world the Good News of God's love for us all.

Jesus last words to the disciples are an affirmation of the Trinity – not an explanation, for who can explain this great mystery? No, they are an affirmation of the three persons in One God. The commandment is to baptize in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, so that all people may be blessed and watched over by the one God, one Holy Trinity. Thus ensuring the fulfilment of those very last words of Jesus on earth – that God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is always with us, yes, even to the end of time.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, Who created me in the image and likeness of God.

*Glory be to the Son, Who through his Passion and Cross, triumphed over hell
and showed me the way to heaven.*

*Glory be to the Holy Spirit, Who cleansed me of my original sin at Baptism
and blesses me with graces every day.*

With my voice and my heart, I glorify You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

You are great and do wonderful things.

You alone are my God.

All praise and honour and glory are yours now and forever,

O most Holy Trinity! Amen. Alleluia!

‘Holy God, We Praise Thy Name!’ is a hymn with a beautiful Trinitarian conclusion:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXmGj6id7eU>

And here are my Parents (in a photo taken in 1988, with me poking in behind) at the very top of the Spanish Steps, in front of the Church of Il Trinite dei Monti, which does indeed look out over the Eternal City. Perhaps once all travel restrictions are lifted we could arrange a pilgrimage to Rome to see all of the famous sites (although, when I take Pilgrimages to Rome, sites include some fabulous Pizzerias, and the CD shop where I learned most of my Italian!). As it is Sunday, and to get you in the mood, how about a little quiz about Rome’s famous places? You know the drill! Grab a coffee and a cake and off we go to Rome...!

1. So we're off to Rome. Which airport would we expect to land at?

a. Sandro Botticelli b. Raphael c. Michelangelo d. Leonardo da Vinci

2. Time for our first famous site. Whereabouts will we find the Colosseum?

a. To the east, near Stazione Termini, the main train station b. To the north, on the banks of the Tiber c. Centrally located between the Palatine and Esquiline hills d. To the west, near the Vatican

3. Which animal is protected by law in Rome, so that they can be seen living happily amongst the ancient ruins?

a. cats b. rats c. dogs d. pigeons

4. What is the name of the Presidential palace, a beautiful building named after one of Rome's seven hills?

- a. Capitoline b. Palatine c. Quirinal d. Esquiline

5. We of course have to visit the Vatican, and St. Peter's Basilica. Which famous, and infamously crowded, Roman bus goes from the main station, Termini, through the city centre and straight to the Piazza San Pietro? (Careful with your wallets and bags!)

- a. 64 b. 46 c. 12 d. 100

6. What great work of art stands just inside the doorway to St Peter's, incidentally the only one of the artist's works to be signed by him?

- a. Venus de Milo b. Michelangelo's David c. Mona Lisa d. Michelangelo's Pieta

7. Perhaps the best known art treasure in Rome is the Sistine Chapel. What book of the Bible is depicted on centre of the ceiling?

- a. Genesis b. Exodus c. Acts of the Apostles d. Revelation

8. Which famous Roman structure attracts tourists and locals alike, and is decorated every April with pink azaleas?

- a. Spanish Steps b. Colosseum c. Trevi Fountain d. St Peter's

9. There is a 'magic' spot in the square in front of St. Peter's, where most of the columns surrounding the square appear to vanish. True or false?

- a. True b. False

10. The Roman Forum is a huge site, where you can walk among the ruins of the ancient Roman city centre. This is where the Roman Emperors made rousing speeches, where victorious armies marched home to praise and cheers, and where Romans came to pray, shop, meet and debate. What is the name of the ancient road that leads into the Forum from outside the city?

- a. Via Antica b. Via Imperial c. Via Dolorosa d. Via Sacra

Here are the answers, with some more information about the wonderful places - whetting the appetite for a trip to the city, I hope:

1.d Leonardo da Vinci airport is also known as Fiumicino. Rome is also served by Ciampino airport, but it is smaller than da Vinci, and the transport links aren't as good. **2.b** Construction of the Colosseum was begun by Emperor Vespasian in AD 72. It could seat 50,000 spectators, and is still a spectacular site. Gladiators and Romans in costume on the pavements outside will happily pose for photos while pretending to slit your throat with a trident. **3.a** There is a law that allows cats to live without disruption in the place where they were born. If you look carefully, you will see hundreds of wild cats climbing the walls of the Colosseum, and sleeping among the ruins of the Forum. At the Largo de Torre de Argentina you can see a cat sanctuary amongst the ruins of four Republican temples. We'll have to get Tobias a Pet Passport **4.a** The Quirinal is the highest of the Roman hills. Expect a steep walk to get up there! Building of the presidential palace began in 1574, but was not

completed until the 18th century. It used to be the summer residence of the Popes, until 1870. You can visit the interior of the Palace on Sundays only, but it is well worth a look. **5.c** Roman bus schedules change every few months, and the bus numbers change with them. But the 64 bus has remained the same for years. If you can brave the crowds, dodgy hands and often rickety buses (though these are being gradually modernised) then you will have spectacular views as you cross the river and drive up the Via della Conciliazione towards St Peter's. **6.d** The Pieta is a very moving sculpture of Mary cradling her son after the crucifixion. It is Michelangelo's only signed work - look very carefully at the Madonna's sash. Sadly, the statue has to be kept behind bullet-proof glass following a hammer attack in 1972. This is not the only worthwhile part of the church however - the entire building is awe-inspiring, and you can spend a whole day warning round, and going up the Dome!. **7.a** The 800 square metres of ceiling took Michaelangelo four years to paint. Probably the most famous scene is the Creation of Adam, where God's pointed index finger gives Adam life. Don't forget to look at the walls too - as well as Michaelangelo's Last Judgement, you can see fresco panels by various artists, including Ghirlandaio, Signorelli and a beautiful Botticelli maiden. **8.a** The Spanish Steps were named after the Spanish Embassy which is still located in the square at their foot. If you are interested in Romantic poetry, visit the Keats-Shelley house, on the right of the steps as you face up. This is where John Keats died in 1821, and has fascinating exhibits about him, as well as PB Shelley, Mary Shelley and Lord Byron. **9.a** The piazza is one of Rome's most beautiful places. As well as the view of the greatest church in the Christian world, the columns and fountains add serenity and grace. There are two semi-circular colonnades, each with four rows of Doric columns. When you stand on the magic spot (halfway between the central obelisk and either of the two fountains) the four rows are exactly in line, and appear to be one. Try it - it is truly magical – and a great photo opportunity! **10.d** The Via Sacra was the most important road in Rome (and thus in the Roman Empire). It was along this road that armies returned to Rome, and that Emperors travelled to their coronations. To get the most interesting view, go at night when the cobbled road is quiet, and lit up to create a very atmospheric and eerie mood.

Let's finish off with a rather beautiful Prayer for the City of Rome:

*We give you thanks, Lord,
Because you have called us to serve Christ
And to carry his cross today in the Church,
The Church that has its centre in Rome;
Since you have called us to be one with your Son,
You teach us to give a name to our oneness with him,
In the words of Ignatius of Loyola,
'The true bride of Christ our Lord, who is our Holy Mother Church'.
We thank you for the Church and for Rome*

*That is the image of unity
And the pilgrimage toward this unity,
And for the trials that we must undergo to achieve this unity.
We ask you that we may be faithful to Rome,
To your Son and to the Church,
In this common journey of humanity
Toward the heart of the Trinity,
Toward the contemplation of your face
Of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

And tonight Blackpool are playing Lincoln – or as my mate in Lincoln is calling it ‘Lancaster Diocese versus Nottingham Diocese’! Let’s see who triumphs!

Enjoy joy this beautiful Sunday, and this beautiful Feast (and maybe one day, that Beautiful City!)! I hope you have some nice plans for tomorrows’ Bank Holiday?

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.