

Monday May 31st, 2021, The Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth

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.

A gloriously warm and sunny couple of days for our Bank Holiday. Blessed be the Lord of all weather!

And welcome to the ninth week of the year of the Church. Before we get on to today's Feast of the Visitation, let's just check in on the 'daily' readings, as today we start a reading of the lovely Old Testament Book of Tobit. This the delightful tale of Tobit and his Son, Tobias, religious and law-abiding Jews, who are blessed with the help of an angel. In this first extract, Tobit 1:3,2:1-8, we see the death in war of many of the family's compatriots, and among the good deeds of Tobit is the corporal work of mercy of burying the dead, despite the condemnation of his neighbours; *'The time before this he had to flee, yet here is, beginning to bury the dead again!'*. Our daily Gospel is Mark 12:1-12, in which Jesus tells the parable of the vineyard and the unjust stewards, who mistreat the vineyard owners' servants and eventually kill his son - as the Jewish leaders did to God's prophets of old, and will eventually do to the Son of God; *'It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the keystone.'* The leaders realise that this parable is aimed at them and would have arrested Jesus but, *'they were afraid of the crowds, so they left him alone and went away.'*

But today is the lovely Feast of the Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, with both Elizabeth, and her baby John in her womb recognizing Jesus in the presence of *his* mother's womb, and honouring Mary as the mother of God. We can admire Mary's devotion (as well as her stamina!) in setting out on what must have been an arduous journey to go from Nazareth, where she lived, to a town in Judah where her cousin lived, about seventy miles away, and we often look upon Mary as being the selfless one here, going to help and support her elderly cousin. But we should remember that Mary herself needed help and support from Elizabeth, and this she receives in abundance from Elizabeth's very first greeting, *'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.'* And it is only after 'confirmation' from Elizabeth about her birth and her role, that Mary finally breaks forth in praise and joy, and presents us with the beautiful prayer that we know as 'The Magnificat.'

My soul magnifies the Lord

And my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;

Because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid;

*For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed;
Because He who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is His name;
And His mercy is from generation to generation
on those who fear Him.
He has shown might with His arm,
He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and has exalted the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He has sent away empty.
He has given help to Israel, his servant, mindful of His mercy
Even as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.*

As St. Ambrose once said in referring to this wonderful prayer, ‘*Let Mary's soul be in us to glorify the Lord; let her spirit be in us that we may rejoice in God our Saviour.*’

*Gracious God,
who gave joy to Elizabeth and Mary
as they recognized the signs of redemption at work within them:
help us, who have been given the grace to share in their joy
to know the Lord deep within us
and his love shining out in our lives,
that the world may rejoice in your salvation.
May Christ the Son of God, born of Mary,
fill us with his grace to trust his promises and obey his will.
And may You, who sent Mary to visit Elizabeth
to share with her the joy of the divine plan,
and gain the succour and wisdom of her cousin
give us grace to tell out the good news of Christ
and receive his blessing and mercy.
Through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,
One God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

So let's sing the Magnificat, ‘Tell Out My Soul, The Glory of the Lord.’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6ji4y9Q-K0>

So last week I managed to pop down to my mate Fr. Ed in Lincoln. He has just moved parishes from the outskirts to the city centre of Lincoln, to a beautiful Church called St. Hugh's (after St. Hugh of

Lincoln, appropriately). While I was there the work was completed on the erection of a whole lot of scaffolding, ready for some much needed (and jolly expensive) tower repairs. As you can see, the scaffolding is pretty scary - especially the little bit that jumps out towards the cross on the right! Ed's Assistant Priest, Fr. Patrick, is going to climb the scaffolding, and I did think of doing a sponsored climb up and join him, but perhaps not... And the 'Nottingham Diocese versus Lancaster Diocese' football final (or Lincoln versus Blackpool) was finally won by Lancaster Diocese – with Lancaster scoring *all* of the goals! Well done Blackpool! I trust Ed isn't too distraught! And whether we are victorious or not, the following prayer is always appropriate, in many circumstances, not just sporting games;

Dear Lord,

Please give us a faith that expects greater things.

Whatever we do, let us give it our best.

Anxious in nothing, at peace with the promise,

that when we've done all we can,

You'll take care of the rest.

Amen.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Stephen Haydon, whose requiem Mass I will be celebrating in Church this afternoon at 5pm. *May he rest in the peace and love of Christ.*

Enjoy what is left of the Bank Holiday weekend!

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.