

Friday June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021, The Feast of the Sacred Heart

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 here we are at Friday again (is it a getting old thing?). A bit dull outside, but we are promised a lovely weekend!

In our daily readings, in II Corinthians 4:7-15 Paul once again has to defend his position and title of Apostles to those who believe he did not have necessary signs of apostleship. Paul strongly states that his ministry is based on the experience of God's grace, and that *'we are only earthenware jars that hold this treasure, to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God.'* In the Gospel, Matthew 5:27-32, again Jesus says, *'You have heard it said... but I say to you,'* today with regards to morality, as well as making it clear that we should do everything we can to avoid occasions of sin.

But today we celebrate the beautiful Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus recalls Christ's love for us. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus took centuries to become a universal celebration: the devotion goes back to the 11th century, but it was not till the seventeenth century that St. Margaret Mary Alacoque had multiple visions of the Sacred Heart between 1673 and 1675 and 90 years later in 1765, that the feast was officially celebrated, first of all in France. Whilst even before St. Margaret Mary Alacoque had her visions of the Sacred Heart, there was the recorded celebration of this feast, it was not until St. Jean Eudes composed the first Office and Mass of the Sacred Heart, that the first official feast of the Sacred Heart was celebrated on Aug. 31, 1670 in Rennes. In 1856, Pope Pius IX made the feast of the Sacred Heart into a universal celebration, and thus we celebrate today, the second Friday after Pentecost.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a powerful reminder of the love of Christ poured out for us all. It is at once a representation of His divine love and His human love. In the Sacred Heart we see the love of God which created the heavens and the earth; a love which created humankind and then redeemed us in our fallen nature. But the Sacred Heart is also one of fully human love; one which expressed itself in the love of Jesus for His Mother; the love of Jesus for His disciples, and the love which He showed for all He preached to and cared for, even able to forgive those who caused the heart to stop beating when he died on the cross.

*O most holy Heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing,  
I adore you, I love you and will a lively sorrow for my sins.*

*I offer you this poor heart of mine.  
Make me humble, patient, pure, and wholly obedient to your will.  
Grant, good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you.  
Protect me in the midst of danger; comfort me in my afflictions;  
give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs,  
your blessings on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death.  
Within your heart I place my every care.  
In every need let me come to you with humble trust saying,  
Heart of Jesus, help me.  
Amen.*

And this is a rather lovely prayer to the Sacred Heart in Times of Stress, which might be appropriate for many of us after the last year and a half, as we slowly move into whatever our new normality is deemed to be.

*Holy Heart of Jesus, Sweet Sanctuary of rest,  
bring peace to my soul and settle my spirit.  
I vow to place all of my worries and fears  
into the wound of your Sacred Heart,  
there to be tended to in accordance with your perfect will,  
which desires only the best and highest good.  
Your love alone is enough, and I surrender to it;  
clinging to the hope of a swift resolution  
and trusting with confidence in all of your promises.  
Amen.*

And many of the themes of both of these prayers are beautifully covered in the wonderful hymn, Sweet Heart of Jesus.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvDiW1zb-Oo> I also discovered this very bouncy version of the hymn, recorded at Holy Trinity Church in Sutton Coalfield <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0b7xQVfYW-A> . Much as I like my hymns to be quite jolly, I'm not sure this version works. About thirty years ago – more, actually – I attended an ordination of a fellow English College Student in this very Church. I don't remember a calypso band, though.

Hey, did anyone see the partial eclipse of the sun yesterday? I am told that the birds did go a little quieter. This was the best photo of the view from the Bispham that I was sent yesterday – you have to look very carefully, but you can just see the Sun being eaten into. If anyone has a better photo, please send it along! You have to be so careful about not looking directly at the sun, though. Thankfully, someone created an online resource for everyone who suffered retinal damage watching the solar eclipse. It truly is a site for sore eyes... I'll get my coat...

Have a beautiful day, bathed in the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus – preparing for tomorrow, the lovely Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

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.