

Sunday June 20th, 2021, the Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

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.

Well over the past eighteen months I have posted many and varied pictures of scenes along the prom as I've been enjoying my healthy exercise walks. It's such a great opportunity to blow off the cobwebs, to think things through, and to take the opportunity to pray. We are truly blessed to have the wonder of God's creation on our doorstep, as beautiful as it is, whether bathed in sunshine, or the storm is blowing and the waves are crashing. The readings today focus on finding God and recognizing Jesus, and more pertinently finding God and recognizing Jesus *in nature*, in the world around us, not least in the midst of storms. In today's first reading, Job 38:1,8-11, the voice of God, beginning his reply to Job, comes from the middle of the Tempest, with the storm itself becoming a metaphor for the trials of Job which are now concluding, '*...here your proud wave shall break.*'

And today's Gospel, Mark 4:35-41, introduces us to what was the first of many storms for the disciples, but not just a storm as in 'tempest at Sea'; a storm, in the sense of a 'crisis'. A storm at sea is something that quite a few of the apostles would be familiar with, being fisherman, and probably conscious of friends and colleagues who had been lost at sea in such circumstances. And although at this stage of the Gospel the Apostles are still quite early on in the journeys of faith – Peter's declaration that Christ is indeed the Messiah is still five chapters away - when crisis overwhelms them, they immediately turn to Jesus. It's obvious from their decision to wake him that they want him to do something. No doubt they did not expect the action that Jesus took, commanding the wind and the sea to quieten. This great miracle over nature leaves the Apostles even more confused: who can this be? But certainly this incident allows the Apostles a little glimpse of the power and divinity of Jesus, and this was just one of many great Revelations and signs that were to come, signs that would both confirm their belief and strengthen their faith.

When we are faced with difficulties and disappointments, when we find ourselves in times of danger, like the Apostles, then it is a time to remind ourselves of just who Jesus is. But also how and what we say when we speak, when we pray to him. Many people rarely think of speaking to God, and when they do, like the Apostles here, it is only in a moment of crisis. Never do they think of thanking God. Never do they think that these spiritual words can and should be a part of our everyday lives, from morning to night, from before meals, to after the news, when we often see people and images which cry out to us to pray for them. And many prayers often are little more than a list of wants, big and

important, or small and somewhat trivial. Not that there is anything wrong with this kind of prayer at all. But there is so much more to pray about.

Praying more is something that we can all do, making prayer a regular part of our daily lives – our individual lives, whatever they may entail. There are as many different styles and kinds of prayer as there are pray-ers. It's just that there's not enough people praying. As Catholics we surely know many prayers, prayers for every different occasion, and if we do not wish to use formal prayer structures then we do not have to. And when words fail us, we can remain silent, or, dare I say it, speak in tongues. As for the thorny topic of how our prayers are answered... Well, certainly the Apostles did not expect Jesus to respond to their plea in such a dramatic way. We can never know how our prayers are answered, only that they are heard. Which is why, in the Lord's prayer Christ put so much emphasis on seeking the will of God, rather than our own will, something which he put into practice and in his prayer, in the Garden of Gethsemane.

But perhaps most of all in our prayer we can develop our relationship with God, come to know his Son in a greater and deeper way, allowing the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts and share with us the great Gifts of the Spirit. Like the Apostles, through regular prayer, we can come to know more about the enormous power and the divinity of God. Through prayer, meditation and a greater sense of spirituality, our faith can be strengthened. If prayer really does strengthen our faith and lead us closer to God, then perhaps when we are sick, when we are faced with troubles, when the waves are crashing all around us, our first thought will not be to cry out Lord, do you not care? But instead, as Christ taught us in the prayer which bears his name, *'thy will be done'*.

So whatever storm we are in the midst of:

*In the midst of this storm, Jesus,
You are the only One who can bring peace.
You are the Prince of Peace.
Your peace surpasses all understanding.
Your peace guards my heart and mind.
You are my Peace.
Confusion and chaos demand my attention.
Fear and frustration invade my thoughts.
But You are all-knowing and all-powerful.
You can still the raging storm within me.
Your Word will quiet my heart and help me to breathe again.
Where there is disorder, bring clarity.
Where there is anxiety, bring peace.*

Help me to be still and know that You are God.

Please fill me with the assurance that You are in control.

Lord, please seal my heart and home with the unmistakable power of Your presence.

When I am full of despair, cover me in Your love.

When there is no reason to be at peace, be my Peace.

Lord, please bring me into Your peace so I can know You as my Prince of Peace.

I think we may have sung this hymn quote recently, but it is too appropriate not to sing it today: 'Do Not Be Afraid' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psgn0tAp6IE>, knowing that when we walk through the waters he will be with us.

Talking of storms at sea, over in Hong Kong my brother informed me that last weekend they had an extra day's holiday for the Dragon Boat Festival. I'll let him tell you about it: *'Monday is the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar which means we get a day off for Dragon Boat Festival. Covid has, again, put paid to international Dragon Boat races, but we can still dig into 粽子 – glutinous rice dumplings. These treats consist of sticky rice stuffed with a variety of fillings, and are tightly wrapped in bamboo leaves, usually in a triangular shape. It's a traditional dish sold at street stalls, in supermarkets, or made at home.'* So Happy Dragon Boat Festival, and let's pray there were no storms at sea! Incidentally, St. Medard is traditionally regarded as the patron saint against bad weather. Let's pray his prayer – perhaps especially for those at sea:

Lord Jesus,

through the intercession of St. Medard,

be with me during the storms of my life and the storms of nature.

Protect the victims of hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes and other natural disasters

Especially our brethren in the midst of storms at sea.

Send in helpers and multiply the supplies that are needed for their aid.

You calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee;

deliver us now from the storms that rage around us. Amen.

Well the rain is definitely approaching, but let's not allow it to dampen our spirits:

Lord, we are blessed by your gift of rain.

May the land will rejoice,

and the rivers sing Your praises,

and the hearts of all people be made glad.

And on that note, have a great Sunday, and let's look forward to a great week.

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.