

Thursday June 24th, 2021, Feast of the Birthday of St. John the Baptist

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 nice early start again, to make up for yesterday! Though not looking too good outside, we have a funeral at 10:30 and mass at Noon, so on with the day!

So Abram has been promised many descendants, as many as the stars in the heavens. But how? Abram wondered how he was going to have any children at all, never mind a whole descendancy, as he believed his wife was too old. And, in a very Old Testament plotline In Genesis 16:1-12, his wife Sarai suggests he has a child by his servant girl, Hagar, who is promised by an angel that she too would have many descendants, from Abram's son who is named Ishmael. We'll hear a lot more from him when he grows up!

It's no good just constantly saying empty words to the Lord in prayer, we must build our whole lives upon him. Matthew 7:21-29 gives us the parable of the two men building their houses, one on rock, the other on sand. The person who listens to the words of Jesus and takes them seriously is like one who builds his house on a rock. That house perseveres. But as for the man who doesn't listen to the Lord, is like the man who builds his house on sand, whose house falls during the storm, *'and what a fall it had!'*

*Jesus,
you are the solid rock,
the only one that is good for a building a solid foundation as Christ which cannot be shaken.
I decide to be wise and build on you today because all other sand is a sinking sand.
When the storm comes, you will make me stand strong and never be shaken.
You are the way, the truth, and life, I chose to follow the true way, I chose to follow you.
Jesus, I hold onto you today, you are a strong pillar,
let me be safe from all storms.
Let me stand before you steadfast and strong, built on the Rock. Amen.*

So let us not worry when we 'hear the rolling thunder' as we sing once again (I know, but it *is* a great hymn) 'How Great Thou Art' in a very 'big sing' from 'Songs of Praise'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBLRsUMtuFQ> And, I'm sorry, I can't resist it, but here's a great American version of the hymn, sung by Country Singer Carrie Underwood (with a great change of key for the third verse). I actually heard this version for the first time at the Crematorium a few weeks

ago, and immediately came home and ordered the CD on Amazon.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yf6C0L_7-CA

And today is the Solemnity of The Birthday of St. John the Baptist. Only the Gospel of Saint Luke tells us the details of John's birth. John's mother and father were Elizabeth and Zechariah. They were beyond the age for having children, but Zechariah, a priest who served in the Temple in Jerusalem, was told one night by the Archangel Gabriel that Elizabeth would give birth to a boy they must name John. Zechariah was dumbfounded. Literally, when he disbelieved this annunciation, he was rendered speechless until the child's birth. When his speech was finally restored, a torrent of praise gushed out in the canticle known as the Benedictus. Zechariah's prayer of praise lives on in that it is prayed as part of the Breviary every single morning prayer. The celebration of the nativity of John the Baptist is perhaps the oldest liturgical feast day in all Christendom, much older than the Feast of Christmas itself. Today's feast is placed three months after the Annunciation, on March 25, because that Gospel scene tells us that Elizabeth, John's mother, was six months pregnant at the time. Three more months take us to June 24. (The one-day discrepancy between March 25 and June 24 is an accident of counting. If December and June each had thirty-one days there would be no discrepancy.) The three related feast days line up beautifully: March 25, the Annunciation; June 24, the birth of John the Baptist; December 25, the birth of Christ.

*Oh God,
you gave St. Elizabeth, in her old age, the gift of a son,
St. John the Baptist,
who would prepare the way for Jesus to begin His ministry here on earth.
Lord, Fill Your people with the joy of possessing graces
like those of Saint John the Baptist,
and direct the minds of all us in the way of salvation and peace.
St. John was martyred for truth and justice,
so may we Dear God, energetically profess our Faith in You,
and help us to lead others to Your Way, Your Truth, and Your Eternal Life.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

And now over to Paul for our throwback photos for the week: *'This weeks contribution is all about Bispham All Hallows Church. The earliest reference to All Hallows Church dates from the reign of King Richard I. Initially it was probably a chapel annexed to the Parish of Poulton. The present church dates from 1883 and until 1821 the parish church of Bispham was the only place of worship in Blackpool. The Norman zodiac arch is well worth a visit. Photo 1. A rare picture of a thatched cottage, with hens in the foreground. This area together with the 'new' graveyard was once a farm and probably at some time owned by the Allens (Cardinal Allen) of Fleetwood. The present house,*

'Church Villa', is roughly on the site of the farmhouse. Photo 2. The church, showing the lynch gate, the Sunday School building on the left and Bridgend Farm in the distance, on the right. Church Farm stood opposite the church on the extreme right. Photo 3. This scene from the 1930's shows how rural this area was. The vicarage stands in the grounds to the left and on the right is a field on which Montgomery School now stands. Around the corner are Church and Bridgend farms.' Once again cheers to Paul for those great photos and glimpse of our past!

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Margaret Audrey D'Cruze, whose funeral I will celebrate at Carleton later this morning. *May she rest in the peace of Christ.*

So with the birthday of John the Baptist today, that means six months tomorrow it's Christmas day! Better start writing those Christmas cards..! And put the sprouts on to boil... Have a great day!

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.