

Wednesday June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Wednesday in the Thirteenth Week of Ordinary Time Year I

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 a beautiful good morning early start, as it's two funerals and a mass today, with the first funeral at Carleton at 8:30am (battling through school traffic!), so on with The Message! (With a quick *Bravo* to England after yesterday evening!)

Remember where we are in the plot? In Genesis 21:5,8-20 Isaac was born to Abraham and Sara, with Abraham being one hundred years old when he was born! Sarah finds herself jealous of the slave girl Hagar's son, Ishmael, as he plays with Isaac, and at first doesn't want him to receive Abraham's descendancy, but God assures everyone that as they are both sons of Abraham, they will both receive Abraham's inheritance.

We have the strange story of the demoniacs being cured and the devils ending up in the pigs - animals whose meat the Jews were forbidden to eat. Understandably there is much confusion about the meaning of the event, but also great curiosity, especially for the people who witness the event first hand; *'At this the whole town set out to meet Jesus; and as soon as they saw him they implored him to leave the neighbourhood.'* Let us pray for a greater knowledge of the Godhead, and understanding of Jesus:

*Father, thank You for Your Word which is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path and thank You Father, for the Lord Jesus Christ, the living Word made flesh, Who has life in Himself and is the light of the world in Whom is no darkness at all.*

*Lord, more than anything else, I desire to bathe in that light of the Lord Jesus so that the light of His love and grace may shine through me to others, especially at those times when the circumstances of life seem to be particularly gloomy and dark.*

*Father, You have called us to be lights in the world, reflecting the glory and light of Christ and I pray that I may become His reflection, so that the world may see my good works and glorify my Father in heaven.*

*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Let us sing that great hymn, the so-called twenty-third psalm, 'The Lord Is My Shepherd.'

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbGsIVeKU\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbGsIVeKU_E)

And, following on from our celebrations of Peter and Paul, today is the Feast of the First Martyrs of the See of Rome. There were Christians in Rome within a dozen or so years after the death of Jesus. In July of A.D. 64, more than half of Rome was destroyed by fire. Rumour blamed the tragedy on Nero, who went to redirect the blame accusing the Christians. A great multitude of Christians were put to death, with the pagan historian Tacitus and St. Clement of Rome telling of a night of horror (August 15, 64 A.D.) when in the imperial parks Christians were put into animal skins and hunted, brutally attacked, and made into living torches to light the road for Nero's chariot. St. Augustine reminded us why we celebrate the martyrs: *'Christians celebrate the memory of the martyrs with religious ceremony in order to arouse emulation and in order that they may be associated with their merits and helped by their prayers.'*

*Anonymous first martyrs of Rome,  
your blood is still wet, and your sufferings still felt,  
in the same Church of Christ to which you belonged through baptism.  
Through your intercession, help the baptized of today be as courageous as you in all things.  
O God, who consecrated  
these abundant first fruits of the Roman Church  
by the blood of the Martyrs,  
grant, we pray, that with firm courage  
we may together draw strength from so great a struggle  
and ever rejoice at the triumph of faithful love.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.*

Another old Roman photo today, in honour of our Martyrs. Here's me at the Colosseum in Rome, where the deaths of many of the martyrs we celebrate today would have taken place. There were many different types of executions in the Colosseum. Christian Martyrs were executed as common criminals by crucifixion or 'damnatio ad bestia' (thrown to the wild beasts). The vicious and cruel emperors and Romans delighted in even more novel ways of executing Christian Martyrs. The Emperor Nero, as the historians mentioned above, also introduced twilight executions where Christians were nailed to the cross and burned alive as torches to light the arena of the Colosseum. As we remember the martyrs of 2000 years ago, let us not forget persecutions to the Christian faith today:

*Almighty God  
I pray today for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are being oppressed, persecuted, and abused for their faith just as Jesus was.  
Comfort and give courage to Christians in countries where many are experiencing physical harm, intimidation, and unjust imprisonment at the hands of their oppressors.*

*Our heavenly Father, thank you for welcoming into your arms all Christian martyrs who have given their lives because they refused to stop sharing the gospel and living out their faith.*

*Heal the hearts and minds of those who have lost loved ones because of persecution and restore them to full physical and spiritual health.*

*For those who persecute my brothers and sisters in Christ, I pray that their hearts will be touched by the wonderful faith of those they attack.*

*I pray also that they will open their hearts to your love.*

*Through Jesus Christ our Lord,*

*Amen.*

Please pray for the repose of the souls of Anthony David Tucker, and Mary June Taylor, whose funerals I will be celebrating at Carleton today. *May they rest in God's love and peace.*

Be blessed for the freedom to enjoy this beautiful 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.