

Tuesday December 22nd, Tuesday in the Fourth Week of Advent.

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 it looks like a rather beautiful morning.

Yesterday the readings were full of joy at the coming of the Messiah, and today the readings are full of thanks. In Isaiah 1:24-28 Hannah gives thanks for the birth of her son, Samuel and presents him in the Temple. *'This is the child I prayed for, and the Lord granted me what I asked him.'*

And in Luke 1:46-56 we have Mary's great prayer of thanksgiving to God, the Magnificat. We often think of Mary visiting Elizabeth to help her, but I think it's equally true that Mary herself needed help and support from the elder cousin. It's significant that it is only after Elizabeth greets Mary as the Mother of the Lord that Mary finally signs her great song of joy. Today, let us pray the Magnificat with her.

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,*

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

And why don't we sing the Magnificat as well, 'Tell Out My Soul, The Glory Of The Lord.'

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

And our beautiful 'O' Antiphon: *'O king whom all the peoples desire, you are the cornerstone which makes all one. O come and save man whom you made from clay.'*

As Mary travelled to see Elizabeth, perhaps we should think of anyone who is travelling at this time. Usually at this time we pray about the adverse weather conditions travellers may face, but there are many other worries this year. I found this Travellers' Prayer in a Time of Pandemic. It's actually an American Jewish prayer, which is why the word 'God' is written G-d. Writing 'G-d' instead of God is a fairly recent custom in American Judaism. Many believe this to be a sign of respect, and the custom comes from an interpretation of the commandment in Deuteronomy 12:3-4 that we should not erase or destroy God's name and should avoid writing it. With the advent of computers and the internet, rabbinic authorities have debated whether or not this applies to what is typed on a computer or read on a screen. Most have concurred that it does not apply. The bulk of Jewish legal opinion agrees that the law applies only to the written name of God when written in Hebrew and not when written in other languages. Never the less, as I said, G-d has become common in American Judaism, so I present the beautiful prayer as written:

*May it be Your will,
Our G-d,
G-d of our fathers and mothers,
That we journey in peace
And return in peace,
Safe from the ancient hazards of travel –
Enemies, thieves, ambushes and wild beasts –
And safe from modern perils –
Plane crashes and traffic wrecks,
Scammers and con artists,
Infectious disease and quarantine –
So that our travel serves its highest purpose,
And we reach our destination and return home
In joy, life and health.
Grant us grace in Your eyes
And in the eyes of all whom we meet.
Barukh atah Adonai, sho'me'a t'filah.
Blessed are You Adonai, Who hears prayer.*

Both my Hong Kong and Australian were due to be travelling to Britain this Christmas, The Hong Kong crowd to spend Christmas with my niece in Scotland, and the Aussies to spend Christmas here. We're hoping for Christmas 2021! Meanwhile, both families are preparing the Christmas Feasts. My sister in law present to you the first of the many (many) mince pies she will be making (and I can vouch for the fact that they are stunning), while my niece Antonia is making jam for her Black Forest Yule Log – a Nigella recipe!

I am grateful for that which I have.

I am not sorrowful for that which I do not.

I have more than others, less than some,

but regardless,

I am blessed with what I have.

Have a great day, and count those blessings. I'm counting the blessing that I managed to get an appointment at the barbers this afternoon...

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost (or kind of bunched up). Any suggestions for ways to keep our faith and spirits up at this time are most welcome!

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.