

Wednesday December 23rd, Wednesday 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.

'But instead it just kept on raining, a veil of tears for the Virgin birth'. Well that about sums up the wet morning!

Before the Messiah will come, a prophet will be sent to prepare the way, to purify the people. As we know, John the Baptist was often mistaken for the prophet Elijah. The Prophet Malachi 3:1-4,23-34 gives us the prophecy; *'Know that I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before my day comes... He shall turn the hearts of fathers towards the children, and the hearts of children towards their fathers.'*

In Luke 1:57-66 Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, gets his power of speech back when he gives the child the name given by the angel. *'All those who heard of it treasured it in their hearts, "What will this child turn out to be?" they wondered.'* The Gospel concludes, *'And the hand of the Lord was with him.'*

*Father, I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you:
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me,
and in all Your creatures -
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul;
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you Lord,
and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands,
without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
For you are my Father.
Amen.*

‘Come, Jesus, Come.’ Let us sing ‘Like a Sea Without a Shore... Maranatha’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOw2DJP7P68>

And our beautiful ‘O’ Antiphon: *‘O Immanuel, you are our king and judge, the One whom the people await and their Saviour. O come and save us, Lord, our God.’*

John the Baptist’s Father is an interesting character, and in many ways is a model of patience. If, as suspected Zechariah and Elizabeth were around sixty years of age when the events take place, he has patiently waited for, as the Angel Gabriel says, ‘Your prayer has been heard,’ that he should have a child. Then, when he questions the word of God, he is struck dumb, and has to wait until the birth of his Son to be able to speak and proclaim the prophecy about his Son, praising the Lord for his great gift (as we’ll hear in tomorrow’s Gospel). As we wait patiently for Christmas, and await a return for whatever we are going to find normal in the future, perhaps we could take a leaf out of Zachariah’s patient waiting.

Dear Lord,

I confess that I am often impatient with the processes of this world.

My resources, wisdom and power are so limited

that I control very few of the things that happen in my life.

I grow frustrated with the challenges and unexpected troubles that crop up so often.

But when I think more deeply, I realize that these setbacks and circumstances

can accomplish more to shape my character than having everything go my way.

It is through such difficulties that patience, steadfastness and fortitude are forged

by Your wise and loving hands.

May I learn to wait on You, to hope in You,

to trust in You, to delight myself in You

and to unreservedly commit my ways to You.

In Your Son’s name I pray. Amen.

So yesterday I popped to a friend’s house who is away for Christmas to check on the post etc. There was a card from the Post Office to say that a parcel was too big for the letter box and was being held at the parcel office. I texted him, and asked him to send me a picture of his driving license for proof of identification, which he did. When I got to the parcel office I was told that though they could show it to me, which they did, they couldn’t give me the parcel, as they don’t accept copies of identification. However they could, without identification, have it redirected to the presbytery, so that it will arrive here today. Am I missing something? They couldn’t give it to me in person, but could have it redirected? Even the guy in the sorting office was laughing at the ludicrous state of affairs. Hey hoo! It should arrive today.

And so final preparations for the Christmas services are underway, and Hilary and Jenny are hard at work preparing the flowers for our feast, as you can see in the attached picture. We all look forward to seeing their wonderful creations.

*O Lord, the creator of all things of beauty,
grant to those who serve you with their gifts of floral art,
a sense of your majesty and a desire to heighten
the worship of the Holy Church by the dedicated use of their gifts.
This we ask in the name of Him
who with the Father is the Creator and Sustainer
of all good things Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

Please pray for the repose of the souls of Mary Todd and Ron Taylor whose funerals I will be celebrating later today at Carleton Crematorium. *May they rest in the peace of Christ.*

I hope all your final preparations for Christmas are going well, and look forward to seeing many of you over the coming week.

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.