

Thursday September 24th, Thursday in the Twenty-Fifth Week In Ordinary Time Year II

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 don't forget the 10pm curfew tonight. Or something.

After three days with the Book of Proverbs, we move on to another Book of Wisdom, the book of Ecclesiastes or, more correctly, Qoheleth, the Hebrew word for preacher. Our extract, Qoheleth, 1:2-11, begins: '*Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity*'. This refers to the uselessness of human things. In Hebrew the word means wind, puff or vapour; as used here it means barrenness, impermanence and the illusory nature of things. They deceive anyone who puts their trust in them.

In Luke 9:7-9 we see how Jesus was now making too many waves in the area. Even Herod, who had beheaded John, was getting worried. Many believed that Jesus might be Elijah, whom it was said would come *before* the Messiah.

Dear Lord Jesus, I long to know You more and more and have a deep yearning in my soul to draw closer to You, Lord. I know so much about You, Your birth in Bethlehem, Your ministry to hurting and oppressed people, Your crucifixion, burial and resurrection and your present ministry, where You are seated on the right hand of the Father in heaven. But Lord, I want to know You personally and intimately and to be identified with You in every area of my life.

Help me I pray to identify with You. To identify with Your death, so that I may die to self and live in newness of life. Lord, it was Paul that prayed, 'that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, and being conformed to His death,' and Lord, I pray that too. And what is more Lord, I also want to be able to say with him, "that I consider everything loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

Help me day by day to grow in grace and in a knowledge of You, until I can say, "it is not I that live, but Christ who lives in me." I ask this in His precious name,

Amen

And so for our hymn today let us sing 'All People That on Earth Do Dwell, Sing To The Lord With Cheerful Voice.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DibkDQbzEo>

And today in England we are celebrating the Feast of Our Lady of Walsingham. In 1061, so the story goes, the lady of the manor of Little Walsingham in Norfolk, a widow named Richeldis, prayed to our Lady asking how she could honour her in some special way. In answer to this prayer Mary led

Richeldis in spirit to Nazareth and showed her the house in which she had first received the angel's message. Mary told Richeldis to take the measurements of this house and build another one just like it in Walsingham. It would be a place where people could come to honour her and her Son, remembering especially the mystery of the Annunciation and Mary's joyful 'yes' to conceiving the Saviour.

The late eleventh century and all through the twelfth and thirteenth century was the era of the crusades, which saw a growing interest in the sites consecrated by the human presence of Jesus in the Holy Land. But now pilgrims needed not to go so far; in England itself there was a 'new Nazareth' built by one of their own countrywomen. After some time Augustinian canons took over the care of the holy house and enshrined it in a special chapel within a much larger church. Pilgrims began to come from all over England and even abroad. From the time of Henry III nearly all the kings and queens of the realm visited Walsingham, as well as hundreds of ordinary people seeking help, healing and inner peace. Walsingham ranked with Rome, Jerusalem and Compostella in importance as a pilgrimage destination.

However, the Shrine was destroyed at the time of the Reformation, and only rebuilt at the beginning of the twentieth century, mainly due to the inspired leadership of the Anglican vicar of Walsingham, Fr Hope Patten. He revived devotion to Our Lady under this title and built a new shrine Church and Holy House in the village, together with a statue modelled on that depicted on the ancient priory seal. It shows a seated Mary with her Son on her lap holding a book of the gospels. Meanwhile a Miss Charlotte Boyd had purchased and restored the ancient Slipper Chapel a mile away and gifted it to the Catholic Church. This has since become the National Shrine of the Catholic Church in England. It's a beautiful place, and if you haven't been, and you find yourself in North Norfolk, I would urge you to call in. Walsingham is a village dedicated to Mary, a place of ecumenical pilgrimage with a growing understanding of the original message of Walsingham as received by Richeldis – that it should be a place where the joy of the Annunciation could be remembered and celebrated, for the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us through Mary's joyful and ready 'yes,' spoken within an ordinary house that would become the boyhood home of the Son of God himself.

*Grant we pray, almighty God,
that as in the mystery of the Incarnation
the Blessed and ever Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Walsingham,
conceived your son in her heart
before she conceived him in the womb,
so we, your pilgrim people,
rejoicing in her motherly care,
may welcome him into our hearts*

*and become a holy house fit for his eternal dwelling,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

This is a link to the hymn 'Mary of Walsingham' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kO0_QHFtTgA
and here is a real throwback photo of me on a pilgrimage to Walsingham in 1985 - I'm carrying the cross. The priest leading the procession some of you will know is Father John Watson, from Cleator, and now stationed in Workington.

Many thanks for some of your ideas regarding Christmas Masses etc. Bearing in mind that people often come to Mass at Christmas time who don't come any other time and therefore would not know about having to 'register' to come to Mass, we do need to have a good think about Masses and times. More suggestions very grateful.

Mass on Saturday evening was recorded and is on the YouTube at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqqVJRJzufA&feature=youtu.be>
Texts for mass can be found at <http://universalis.com/mass.htm>

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, though the building is, most of the time. 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.