

Saturday October 24th, Saturday In The Twenty-Ninth 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 I hope you are all having a great start to the weekend, and to the half term!

As we continue our reading of the wonderful Letter to the Ephesians 4:7-16 today we are beautifully reminded that we are all part of the mystical body. Each of us has been given certain gifts - all to build up the body of Christ. If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ. The Body of Christ, which is us, is to grow and grow, so *'we shall not be children any longer... the body grows until it has built itself up in love.'*

And in Luke 13:1-9 we have the Parable of the Fig Tree, which is given one more chance to bear good fruit for the gardener. The message is quite clear that we are all called to bear good fruit for our heavenly Father. But what is important about the Parable is that the fig tree is given all the help it needs to bear that good fruit, as the gardener says, *'give me time to dig round it and manure it.'* With the Scriptures, the Sacraments, and the teaching of the Church God has given us all the help we need to produce that good fruit for him.

Dear Lord,

I pray today to ask for help.

Help me to have the actions, words, and wisdom necessary to bear good fruit.

May the things I think, the things I say, and the deeds I do

show other people the love of Christ.

Help me to be a force for good, and an influence on others. Amen.

And for a hymn today let us sing 'Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUI2EyYIEKs>

And today we have a fascinating Saint, Saint Anthony Mary Claret known as the 'Spiritual Father of Cuba'. Born in Spain in 1807 in his spare time as weaver and designer in the textile mills of Barcelona, Anthony learned Latin and printing. Ordained at 28, he was prevented by ill health from entering religious life as a Carthusian or as a Jesuit, but went on to become one of Spain's most popular preachers. Anthony spent 10 years giving popular missions and retreats, always placing great emphasis on devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It was said that his rosary was never out of

his hand. At age 42, he founded a religious institute of missionaries beginning with five young priests, known today as the Claretians.

Anthony was appointed to head the much-neglected archdiocese of Santiago in Cuba. He ceaselessly preached but suffered bitter opposition mainly for giving instruction to black slaves. A hired assassin - slashed open his face and wrist, yet Anthony succeeded in getting the would-be assassin's death sentence commuted to a prison term. In total fifteen attempts were made to kill him. He was recalled to Spain for a job he did not relish - being chaplain for the queen. Anthony went on three conditions: He would reside away from the palace; he would come only to hear the queen's confession and instruct the children; and he would be exempt from court functions. In the revolution of 1868, he fled to Paris with the queen's party, where he preached to the Spanish colony.

All his life Anthony was interested in the Catholic press. He founded the Religious Publishing House, a major Catholic Press in Spain, as well as attending the first Vatican Council where he was a staunch defender of the doctrine of infallibility. 'There goes a true saint' one of the Cardinals said. In 1870 at the age of 63 he died, was beatified in 1934 and in 1950 canonized by Pope Pius XII. He is Patron Saint of Weavers, Catholic Printing Presses, and the Canary Isles.

*O God, who for the evangelization of the peoples
strengthened the Bishop Saint Anthony Mary Claret
with admirable charity and long suffering,
grant, through his intercession,
that, seeking the things that are yours,
we may earnestly devout ourselves
to winning our brothers and sisters for Christ.
Who lives and reigns, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Last January I was actually in Cuba for a couple of days, in Havana, with my mate Ed and the family from Australia. It was a fascinating place, with a beautiful Cathedral (which had dreadful modern art Stations of the Cross), a Shrine celebrating the Papal Visit of John Paul II, and a wealth of fascinating history. The first day we had a tour of the City the six of us squeezed to in a Horse and Carriage, and in the evening the adults of the group went on a racing trip round the city in a Pink Cadillac, which was tremendous fun, as you can see from the attached picture. The following day we did the more serious historical tour, and second photo is of me on the balcony from which Fidel Castro would make his speeches - some lasting up to seven hours! Don't worry, I've no idea of getting ideas for sermons that length. Is it me, or does January and the idea of holidays all seem a very long way away? We certainly had a great time, and it's great to have all the photo's to look back on pre lockdown times.

The not-a-lot-of-Newsletter is attached - please note the shout out for toiletries for StreetLife – as well as this week's Bidding Prayers. And enjoy the weekend.

Sunday Morning's mass will be recorded and available on the YouTube sometime tomorrow morning. Texts for each day 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. 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.