

Tuesday November 24th, Tuesday in the Thirty-Fourth Week of 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.

Early morning message, for those who check what time I'm sending. I've got 8:30am mass in Church, school mass with year four in St. Bernadette's, and then I'm hot footing it to my dentists in Preston. So, onward with today's thoughts...!

Today in Revelations 14:14-19 we have the vision of the Last Judgment. There are two ideas of a harvest - the harvest of grain and the harvest of grapes. Those who have persevered will be with the Lord. But those who have not correspond to the grapes of God's wrath which will be put into a huge winepress. It's quite an arresting image!

Jesus reminds his listeners that even the things that seem to be most permanent will disappear, even the very temple they are making their votive offerings in. The end of the world will come with much chaos. Jesus especially warns his listeners in Luke 21:5-11 not to be deceived by the many false prophets who will appear claiming to know when this will be.

God our Heavenly Father,

Help us all to be true to who we are, what we are,

and who we believe in, which is you, You and Your Son Jesus.

Give us the strength to withstand all earthly temptations and falsehoods set before us.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen

Let us sing 'Blest Are The Pure In Heart, For They Shall See Our God.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMYVdGjUC2c>

And today we celebrate the feast of Andrew Dũng-Lạc and his Companions, 117 Vietnamese martyrs. Father Andrew was born in 1795 to pagan parents but fell under the holy influence of a lay catechist, was baptized, became a catechist himself, entered seminary, and was ordained a diocesan priest. He was a model parish priest in every respect. He was beheaded at Hanoi in 1839, one of 117 people martyred in Vietnam between 1820 and 1862, and received beatification during four different occasions between 1900 and 1951. All were canonized by Saint John Paul II.

Christianity came to Vietnam through the Portuguese. Jesuits opened the first permanent mission at Da Nang in 1615. They ministered to Japanese Catholics who had been driven from Japan. Severe

persecutions were launched at least three times in the 19th century. During the six decades after 1820, between 100,000 and 300,000 Catholics were killed or subjected to great hardship. In 1832, Emperor Minh-Mang banned all foreign missionaries, and tried to make all Vietnamese deny their faith by trampling on a crucifix. Persecution broke out again in 1847, when the emperor suspected foreign missionaries and Vietnamese Christians of sympathizing with a rebellion led by one of his sons. The last of the martyrs were 17 laypersons, one of them a 9-year-old, executed in 1862. That year a treaty with France guaranteed religious freedom to Catholics, but it did not stop all persecution.

Father Andrew Dũng-Lạc alone is named on this feast, not because his sufferings were more depraved than those of his co-martyrs, but because they were so similar, St. Andrew's name being symbolic for the entire group.

*O God, source and origin of all fatherhood,
who kept the Martyrs Saint Andrew Dũng-Lạc and his companions
faithful to the cross of your Son,
even to the shedding of their blood,
grant, through their intercession,
that, spreading your love among our brothers and sisters,
we may be your children both in name and in truth.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

There are still Christians being persecuted throughout the world, so perhaps we could pray the following prayer for them:

*Father, You hold Your children in Your mighty hands.
I want to intercede right now on behalf of my brothers and sisters
who are experiencing persecution.
Particularly, I remember those who risk every day being raided by authorities.
Lord have mercy. Give them the courage to endure.
Thank You for their boldness and their faithfulness to You.
Help them not to give up.
Make them ever more aware of Your presence with them.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

And whilst searching for the above prayer, I also found this one for Christians who are being prevented from gathering. It is strangely and sadly appropriate to *us* right now:

*Name above all Names,
You have called us to live for You and exhort one another to love.
In many regions and countries around the world right now,*

Christians are not permitted to meet.

I pray that they may find a way.

Give them safety and veil the eyes of those who would seek to prevent such gatherings.

We thank You that even when we cannot meet,

our unity and connection in Jesus is a greater communion than any physical gathering.

Thank You for the unity we have in Christ. Amen.

Going back to the Vietnamese martyrs, I've never been to Vietnam (though I have seen 'Miss Saigon' four times, but I guess that doesn't count), but anyone who has been tells me it is beautiful. My brother has been there several times on holiday, and sent me a couple of photos he took whilst there to share with you, the one of the Cathedral being St. Joseph's Cathedral in Hanoi, St. Joseph being the patron Saint of Vietnam.

So dentists it is. Hey ho! My appointment is at 12:15pm, although 2:30 (tooth-hurty) would have been appropriate. Very, very old joke. So old that it's probably not even a joke any more.

Be glad of what freedoms we have, even in lockdown, to enjoy this day.

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.