

Thursday December 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve.

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 so it is Christmas Eve, and what a beautiful day it promises to be – which is just as well as the queue for the butchers in the village is stretching to Church car park! Today we really begin our celebrations of Christmas with our Masses and prayers. The seating plans are all arranged, the mass sheets have been printed.... Here we go...!

For our last Advent reading from the Old Testament we turn to the Book of Samuel. David, the most important of all the kings of Israel, is reminded that his house and sovereignty will always last - as a spiritual kingdom. In Samuel 7:1-5, 8-11 through the Prophet Nathan the Lord says, *'I will be a Father to David and he a son to me. Your house and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne will be established for ever.'*

As Mary sang the Magnificat after being greeted by Elizabeth as the Mother of the Lord, so after John's birth, in Luke 1:67-79 Zechariah regains his speech, and is able to offer up his great prayer of praise, the Benedictus. The prayer expresses the joy and thanks of Zechariah for God's work in his own life, in the life of his family, in the life of his religion - the fulfilment of all the messianic prophecies and hopes - and the implications this will have for the whole world. Let us prayer the prayer with him;

*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;  
he has come to his people and set them free.  
He has raised up for us a mighty saviour,  
born of the house of his servant David.  
Through his holy prophets he promised of old  
that he would save us from our enemies,  
from the hands of all who hate us.  
He promised to show mercy to our fathers  
and to remember his holy covenant.  
This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham:  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,  
free to worship him without fear,  
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.*

*You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High;  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,  
to give his people knowledge of salvation  
by the forgiveness of their sins.  
In the tender compassion of our God  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.  
Glory 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 our final beautiful 'O' Antiphon: *'King of the peoples, and corner-stone of the Church, come and save humanity, whom you made from the dust of earth.'*

And let's sing the opening hymn at all our Christmas Masses, 'O Come All Ye Faithful.'

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1wHyMR\\_SCA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1wHyMR_SCA)

Well, it has been quite a journey through Advent, beginning in Lockdown and many different changes as to what we can and can't do, but, even if our plans have been disrupted, I hope that we can celebrate the feast in our different ways as best as possible.

*Lord, on this Christmas Eve,  
we pause to prepare our hearts for a most beautiful celebration:  
Your birth and coming to earth as our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.  
Clear our minds so we can focus on You  
and the joy You bring to us through Your gift of salvation.  
May the same thrill and anticipation that filled Mary, the chosen mother of Jesus,  
consume us and draw us close to You.  
May our spirits cry out, 'Alleluia,' with the host of angels  
who first delivered the good news of great joy.  
Emmanuel, God with Us, Prince of Peace, the Son of God, Messiah  
fill our hearts with both gratitude and worship as we offer you this prayer  
on the eve of the celebrations of your birth.  
Amen.*

Christmas is a time for helping others, and check out Taylor handing over a Christmas hamper to Amazing Grace soup kitchen. As you may remember each year he makes hot chocolate cones and other festive bits to sell at Christmas and always donates to charity. This year he chose Amazing

Grace. A great charity and a great act of charity. Well done you, Taylor. Now *that's* the spirit of Christmas!

I look forward to seeing many of you today and tomorrow, and over the festive season.

Have the best Christmas you can possibly have. God Bless.

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.