

Wednesday November 25<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday 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.

All went well at the dentist's yesterday, not treatment needed, thankfully. It's not the pain of having a filling, it's the pain of the bill at the end. After the check up my dentist, Ben, filmed me sitting in the chair for a prayer video for the children. We prayed that we look after our teeth, thanked dentists for their ministry and hoped they keep safe, and pledged to smile more, all through the intercession of St. Appolonia, a third century Egyptian who had all her teeth knocked out by the henchmen of the Emperor Philip, and who is patron Saint of Dentists, and people who have to go to the dentist. She's usually depicted holding a tooth in a pair of extracting pliers. The annoying thing is that due to covid restrictions he and the hygienist are working separate days so I've got to schlepp off to Preston again next week to get my gnashers cleaned. Hey Ho!

In Revelations 15:1-4 we have another vision of heaven - it is like a sea of glass with flashes of flame like lights going through it. Those who were martyred, those who persevered in their fight with the powers of evil, are the ones who sing the great song of praise:

*How great and wonderful are all your works,  
Lord God Almighty;  
Just and true are all your ways,  
King of nations.*

As the years go by, Luke 21:12-19, we Jesus tells us that those who are loyal to Christ must suffer much persecution at the hands of the wicked, but God will always be there for them. *'You will be hated by all men on account of my name, but not a hair of your head will be lost.'* Let us pray 'St. Patrick's Breastplate':

*Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me.  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.*

*I bind unto myself the Name,  
The strong Name of the Trinity;  
By invocation of the same.  
The Three in One, and One in Three,  
Of Whom all nature hath creation,  
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word:  
Praise to the Lord of my salvation,  
Salvation is of Christ the Lord.*

And as well as saying it, why don't we sing it, 'I Bind Unto Myself Today' which I actually had as the opening hymn at my Ordination. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWdZ13cH5IU>

And today we remember Saint Catherine of Alexandria, like Appolonia a third century Egyptian Martyr. She was born around 287AD in Alexandria, Egypt. Tradition tells she was of noble birth, possibly a princess, and an educated and avid scholar. Around the age of fourteen, she experienced a moving vision of Mary and the infant Jesus, and she decided to become a Christian. When the Emperor Maxentius began persecuting Christians, Catherine visited him to denounce his cruelty. Rather than order her execution, Maxentius summoned fifty orators and philosophers to debate her. However, Catherine was moved by the power of the Holy Spirit and spoke eloquently in defence of her faith. Her words were so moving that several of the pagans converted to Christianity and were immediately executed.

Unable to defeat her, the Emperor ordered her to be tortured and imprisoned. Catherine was arrested and scourged, but did not abandon her faith. The Emperor's own wife, Valeria Maximilla was converted by Catherine, and the Emperor executed his wife because of this. Following her imprisonment, Maxentius made a final attempt to persuade the beautiful Catherine to abandon her faith by proposing marriage to her and making her Empress. Catherine refused, at which the Emperor finally tried to execute her on a breaking wheel – in which a person is laid out on a wheel, with their limbs arranged within the spokes while the executioner smashes them. Unfortunately (or fortunately) the wheel broke, so the Emperor beheaded her. And of course this gave the Catherine Wheel its name, and made Catherine the Patron Saint of Spinners.

*O God,  
Who didst distinguish Thy holy virgin and martyr Catherine  
by the gift of great wisdom and virtue,  
and a victorious combat with the enemies of the Faith;  
grant us, we beseech Thee, through her intercession,  
constancy in the Faith and the wisdom of the saints,  
that we may devote all the powers of our mind and heart to Thy service.*

*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

As I said yesterday, I've never been to Vietnam, but I have been to Egypt, and though I didn't get to Alexandria, I did get to the bustling city of Cairo, buying some Egyptian cotton towels in the 'Old Bazaar in Cairo.' I'd always wanted to see the Pyramids and the Sphinx and for my fortieth birthday I got to do just that. Some people say they find them disappointing, but I thought they were incredible with a whole aura of mystery and history surrounding them. I actually managed to crouch down and get right into the centre of one, which is definitely not for the claustrophobic. Here's proof of my visit!

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Philip Thomson, whose funeral I will be celebrating at Carleton this afternoon at 2:45pm. *May he rest in peace, Amen.*

Have a great day! And smile – even behind your mask!

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.