

Thursday November 26th, Thursday 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.

And a beautiful, but somewhat frosty morning.

Lots of destruction and desolation in this morning's first reading. In Revelation 18:1-2. 21-23.19:1-3. 9 the destruction of Babylon is foretold. It is believed that Babylon refers to the Rome of the famously fiddling Nero. She has become the dwelling-place of demons and a stronghold of every unclean spirit. Just like a big millstone, when thrown into the sea, this Rome will just disappear. But the great multitudes who persevered in spite of persecution will be in the Lord's presence to sing Alleluia, 'The Angel said this "Happy are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the lamb."'"

And in the Gospel, Luke 21:20-28, more desolation is prophesied as the world comes to an end. Eventually the Son of Man, Christ, will come in his power and glory. But for God's faithful people, '*When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.*'

We shudder at signs we see.

Anxieties bombard us.

Our hearts are afraid.

Lord, let us be vigilant, hold our heads high.

Make us a people expectant for your coming

with hope as our stronghold.

Jesus, You once came into our world with all its sorrows.

Keep us awake and alert to your presence

in the midst of our struggles now.

Tell us again that your love will triumph,

And you will share your triumph with all your faithful people.

Though the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

And let today's hymn be 'He Who Would Valiant Be', in the traditional version in our hymnbooks <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkM4FK6O0cQ>

It's a great hymn however those are not the original lyrics. The original, written by John Bunyan, first appeared in the second part of 'Pilgrims Progress' written in 1684, and were only modernised for a

hymn book in 1906. These are the words of the original version before it was bowdlerised, and they're much more fun:

*Who would true Valour see
Let him come hither;
One here will constant be,
Come wind, come Weather.
There's no Discouragement,
Shall make him once relent,
His first avow'd intent,
To be a Pilgrim.*

*Who so beset him round,
With dismal stories,
Do but themselves confound;
His strength the more is.
No lion can him fright,
He'll with a gyant (sic) fight,
But he will have a right,
To be a Pilgrim.*

*Hobgoblin, nor foul Fiend,
Can daunt his Spirit:
He knows, he at the end,
Shall life inherit.
Then fancies fly away,
He'll fear not what men say,
He'll labour Night and Day,
To be a Pilgrim.*

I once used this version at an Ecumenical Service in Freckleton. A few eyebrows were raised, and there was definitely some discrete tittering on the back row. Here's the folk singer Maddy Prior, of the group Steeleye Span, singing a really cool medieval version with the original lyrics.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yHJMPw8RHU>

A couple of weeks ago I wrote about some strange phobias, with regards to Friday 13th. Well yesterday afternoon I got to the chapter on phobias in 'Neuro Linguistic Programming for Dummies' and it gave the names of a few other odd phobias, and some of them seemed rather close to home for me:

Chaetophobia - fear of facial hair (hope no one uses that as an excuse not to come to SB's)
Xyrophobia - fear of razors (I'm frightened of them when they cost 12 Euros)

Galeophobia - fear of cats (but not Tobias)

Philophobia - fear of falling in love (well, falling in love with love is falling for make believe)

Phronemophobia - fear of thinking (sometimes I just sits and thinks and sometimes I just sits)

Odontophobia – fear of the Dentist (which as you can see from the still taken from yesterday’s children’s prayer video, I definitely don’t have)

Pentheraphobia - fear of the mother-in-law (insert your own 1970’s sit-com gag)

finally Phobophobia - fear of phobias (!)

Let’s be mindful though that phobias and fears are serious things, and let’s make one short final prayer today for all those living with fears or phobias:

God, you haven’t given me a spirit of fear.

Come and replace my fear with your power and your love

so I may have a sound mind to live each day glorifying you. Amen.

Enjoy the day, whatever you get up to, but watch out for hobgoblins and foul fiends...

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.