

Friday November 27th, Friday 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.

As you will have heard yesterday, Blackpool is in 'Tier Three Very High Alert' but this still means that Masses can resume, with social distancing, masks, and no socialising between households. So Mass will resume in Saturday 5th, with the new timetable of Saturday 5pm. Sunday 10am, Tuesday 12noon, and Thursday 12noon. Let's do all we can to stay safe and ensure that our Churches can stay open.

Well with some ingenious tinkering we think we've sorted out the streamed mass, so hopefully it is all systems go for 5pm Saturday evening and 10am Sunday morning.

A very long reading today, and very Apocalyptic: Revelations 20:1-4.11-21:2. The power of Satan is being chained and confined to the abyss or to hell. The souls of the just, especially the martyrs and those who suffered for their faith, are brought into the presence of the Lord. Their names are written in the book of life. We will have written our own destiny - both the good deeds and the bad deeds will be opened up. Those names not blotted out will rise and share in God's glory. John then has a vision of heaven and earth renewed: *'I saw a new heaven and a new earth... I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband.'*

In Luke 21:29-33 Jesus' encourages us to use nature, for example, the changes in the life history of the fig tree, to help us see that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. We should look around us and always be alert for the coming of our God, remembering, *'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.'*

*Father in heaven,
Please help me to be always ready,
for my last days, and the last days,
counted worthy
and always watching for the glorious return of my Lord Jesus Christ.
Thank You for Your wonderful grace and keeping power, Father
I trust wholly in you and in Your most gracious salvation,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Well my dear people, I think it is time to think and sort out Christmas. Our services are inevitably going to be very different this year. I am presuming there will be no singing, although we will be able to have some socially distanced solos, and of course we are blessed to have Stephan on the organ, which will provide some much needed atmosphere, as he has done at our streamed and recorded masses. The diocese has suggested we organize some sort of booking system, to make sure we are not overbooked and have to start turning people away. This is my proposal:

Christmas Eve:

12noon Service for Children and families and I'll see if Fr. Christmas can break out of his busy schedule to pop in.

5pm Traditional Candlelit Service

8pm Traditional Candlelit Service

Christmas Day

10am Mass

As you can see the change is moving the 5pm children's service to 12noon, and having the 5pm as an extra Mass, though children are of course welcome at all services. People can book in at the Sunday and weekday masses when hopefully they restart in a week or so's time, or can ring the parish office each morning. Let's do all we can to make the services hauntingly beautiful in these very strange times. **Please email any thoughts, suggestions or comments.**

In and out of school we are aware that Christmas for many families is going to be very difficult this year. To help some of them out I'm afraid I'm once again asking for donations. Mrs. Dukes at school has asked me to put a shout out for brand new board games for all ages and chocolate selection boxes. I know times are hard for many people, but if you are able to buy a board game or a selection box for a child please know that they will be gratefully received. They can be bought to the presbytery any time (feel free to ring to see if anyone is in) or into Church at any of the prayer hour times, and mass times when they resume. Many thanks in anticipation.

Incidentally the Chief Medical Officer of Ireland, Professor Emer Shelley, was on GMTV the other week, as I made reference to in an earlier message. She was asked whether Covid19 was going to restrict the actions of Father Christmas this year. She warned that if Father Christmas were to catch Covid-19 he would be at high risk of serious illness because of his weight. 'He's not exactly thin,' she said. 'If he were having a medical exam, he would be considered clinically obese and that puts him at high risk of diabetes and high blood pressure. And so if he were to catch Covid, then he would be at risk of getting a very serious version of it and being admitted to intensive care. However,' she went on, 'Everybody is asleep when Santa Claus calls, so he's not going to come across anybody when he travels all around the world from Lapland. Secondly, he travels so quickly that even if a part of his entourage were to have the virus attached to them, there is no risk of transmitting the virus to

anybody. So at least that's some good news on the public health front.'

<https://www.express.co.uk/videos/6205470478001/Christmas-Professor-on-travel-restrictions-for-Santa-Claus> So phew and amen to that! Although apparently the Professor has been criticised in some quarters for 'fat-shaming' Father Christmas. Seriously...

*God our heavenly Father,
we pray that we can celebrate the birth of your Son Jesus together,
together as your family, the Church in prayer
and together in our individual communities of love.
May our desire for togetherness not be seen as an act of selfishness,
but as a sincere desire to practice our faith in our Churches and homes,
the freedom to sensibly celebrate the coming of our Saviour
and show to the world the hope we have in your Son's birth,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.*

My brother had promised me a picture of his school's Thanksgiving meal to send to you today, but sadly one of the caterers had been in contact with someone with covid so the whole thing had to be cancelled, so instead here is a picture of my sister-in-laws' 'Autumn to Winter' nail art. She's definitely nailed it!

Enjoy the end of the week, as Advent and Christmas draw closer.

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.