

Saturday November 28th, Saturday 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.

So Advent begins tonight! Don't forget that you can join us for a live streamed Mass on the YouTube tonight at 5pm and tomorrow morning at 10am, with the blessing of the Advent Wreath and the lighting of the first candle.

So here we are. We reach the end of the Book of Revelation and the end of the Church's liturgical year. In Revelations 22:1- we have yet another description of heaven, this time more understandable. It is like the Garden of Eden, only much better. There will be no evil, only good things. The Lord God will be a light to them and they will reign with him forever. For us, let us accept and believe the word of God. *'Happy are those who treasure the prophetic message of this book.'*

For the past week we have been looking at those teachings of Jesus just before his arrest and crucifixion, often concerned with being alert. In Luke 21:34-36 we are told to watch and pray. *'Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.'*

Lord Jesus Christ, we wish to be ready for You when You come on the last day to take us to Heaven for the everlasting wedding feast.

Lord, you said that no one knows the day or the hour when that will be. Therefore, be with us always so that You may guide our actions, thoughts, utterances and wishes, that they may be good and according to Your Holy Will.

Guide us, guard us, protect us and govern us so that on the last day we will still be in communion with You and we will join the choir of the Angels and Saints in Heaven to forever sing of Your praise and glory. Amen.

We are about to begin the Season of Advent and as the last week of Advent very much focuses on our Blessed Mother Mary, I thought we should ask her to be with us in this season in a very special season. Pope Saint John Paul II used to call Mary the 'Mother of Advent', 'May it be she,' he said, 'the Virgin of expectation, who helps us to open our hearts to the One who, by his coming among us, brings the priceless gift of peace to all humanity.' Each Advent John Paul II made it a point to pray to the Blessed Mother and offered special prayers to her, that she may adequately prepare our hearts for

Christmas Day. This beautiful prayer, combined from speeches he gave in 1999 and 2004 makes a beautiful prayer as we begin the Advent season this evening:

*May the Virgin Mary help us to open the doors of our hearts to Christ,
Redeemer of man and of history;
may she teach us to be humble, because God looks upon the lowly;
may she enable us to grow in understanding the value of prayer,
of inner silence, of listening to God's Word;
may she spur us to seek God's will deeply and sincerely,
even when this upsets our plans;
may she encourage us while we wait for the Lord,
sharing our time and energies with those in need.
Mother of God, Virgin of expectation,
grant that the God-who-comes will find us ready to receive the abundance of his mercy.
May Mary Most Holy, Virgin of Advent,
prepare us all to joyfully welcome Christ's coming
and to celebrate worthily his sacramental presence in the mystery of the Eucharist.
Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Don't forget, I'd be grateful for any suggestions re. Christmas Services. My proposal is:

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 Mass

8pm Traditional Candlelit Mass

Christmas Day

10am Mass of Christmas Morning

People will have to book their bubbles for a particular mass, in accordance with diocesan suggestions, and of course children are welcome at any service. Please email any thoughts, suggestions or comments. And as I said yesterday, brand new Board Games and Selection Boxes would be grateful received and distributed by the school, and can be bought to the presbytery or during service times to the Church. Many thanks in anticipation.

As the weather turns somewhat chillier, you can see that thanks to Maria and Eileen, I and Tobias are well prepared!

And Happy Advent! Let's make it a truly joyful season of preparation for our very different Christmas 2020.

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.