

Tuesday December 29th, The Fifth Day within the Octave of Christmas, the Feast of Thomas a Becket

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.

Bit of a miserable start to the day weather-wise, but it will be lovely to see people at our 12noon Mass. Don't forget there is an extra public mass on Friday at 12noon for New Year's Day, the Feast of the Mother of God.

During the octave of Christmas we take the first readings from the first letter of St John. This was one of three letters, probably written by disciples of John, to encourage unity in the early Church, in which there were many divisions. This letter is very positive and loving in tone. In today's first reading, 1 John 2:3-11, we are told that we can be sure that we are in God only when we are living the same kind of life as Christ lived: *'Anyone who loves his brother is living in the light and need not be afraid of stumbling, unlike the man who hates his brother and is in the darkness, not knowing where he is going because it is too dark to see.'*

Our Gospel today is Luke 22:22-35, which we actually heard on Sunday, as it is the Year B Gospel for the Feast of the Holy Family, the touching story of the presentation in the Temple, which has its centre the 'Nunc Dimmitus' of Simeon as God's promise to him is fulfilled as the old man recognises Jesus as the Messiah. *'Now Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see.'*

*Almighty ever-living God,
we humbly implore your majesty
that, just as your only-begotten Son
was presented in the Temple
in the substance of our flesh,
so, by your grace,
we may be presented to you
with minds made pure,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

And isn't it time we sang 'Ding Dong Merrily on High'?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6J_2tKCwu7Q

And today is the Feast of St. Thomas a Becket. Thomas was born in London in 1118 in Cheapside. He was Chancellor of England and in 1162 became Archbishop of Canterbury. His episcopal consecration sparked off a religious conversion. It is said that he changed from being ‘a patron of play-actors and a follower of hounds to being a shepherd of souls.’ His final years were spent defending the position of the Church against King Henry II, which led to many disagreements with the King and Thomas was exiled to France for six years. He had further trials when he returned to Canterbury, and was murdered in 1170 by the King's men in his own cathedral on 29th December. St. Thomas was canonised just three years later. He is honoured as Patron of the English Pastoral Clergy.

*O God, who gave to your Bishop Saint Thomas,
the grace to lay aside all earthly fear
and be faithful even unto death,
grant, we pray, at his intercession,
that your people, disregarding worldly esteem,
may resist what is wrong,
uphold your rule,
and serve you to their life's ends.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever. Amen.*

T.S.Eliot wrote a verse drama ‘Murder in the Cathedral’ about Thomas a Becket. The Interlude of the play is a sermon given by Becket on Christmas morning 1170. It is about the strange contradiction that Christmas is a day both of mourning and rejoicing, which certainly runs through the prophecy of Simeon at the Presentation, and which Christians also do for martyrs. He announces at the end of his sermon, ‘*it is possible that in a short time you may have yet another martyr,*’ words which were all too true. You can get the whole of the radio play at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0hCBo_ZPv0 although I'll probably watch the same author's ‘Cats’ instead <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zfi9rBDW3s8>

Whatever you are doing today, have a jellicle day! (Get the reference?)

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.