

Wednesday December 30th, The Sixth Day within the Octave of Christmas

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.

Our next extract from the First Letter of St. John, I John 2:12-17, reminds us that the love of the Father cannot be in any one who loves the world, because nothing the world has to offer could ever come from the Father but only from the world. *'...the world, with all it craves for, is coming to an end; but anyone who does the will of God remains for ever.'*

And in the Gospel, the she story of the presentation continues Luke 2:36-40. Anna was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied that the child would be the saviour of Jerusalem, *'she began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Israel.'*

*Grant we pray, Almighty God,
that the newness of the Nativity in the flesh
of your only begotten Son may set us free,
for ancient servitude holds us bound
beneath the ancient yoke of sin.
Through Christy our Lord. Amen.*

And let's carry on our traverse through the Christmas Carol list as we sing 'Once In Royal David's City.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRIZ22dn-XY>

Anna is one of the Bible's most interesting women, concluding the sextet of named, pious Israelites surrounding the miraculous births of John and Jesus. Led by divine direction, Anna is led to a life in the Temple where she recognises Jesus as the one who would deliver Jerusalem. Anna is the only woman in the New Testament described as a 'prophetess', in a sense out ranking Simeon, and one of the few people to have their tribal lineage mentioned, as we are told she is of the tribe of Asher. The life of Anna the Prophetess is a witness to us that God keeps His promises. *Holy Prophetess Saint Anna, pray for us.*

I was sent a very interesting editorial from The Times this week, headlined 'Christmas Under Covid: Britain's Faith Communities have made immense sacrifices for the public good.' It spoke about how Christian Churches were prepared to close under the first Lockdown, and upon the various degrees of opening, from private prayer to Masses, have closely followed all governmental directives, and have kept as covid safe as possible. *'Faith communities have gone to great lengths since the onset of the*

crisis to ensure that their premises are Covid-compliant, and to provide the opportunity for virtual worship are home,' concluding that 'the sacrifices undergone by the Churches in Britain this year are due not to a wish for a quiet life but to virtue and compassion for fellow citizens... It has been hard for Christians not to gather as congregations in 2020. When they do so this Christmas, socially distanced and wearing masks, they will testify to their faith in God and their commitment to human fellowship. They are owed the respect and gratitude of the nation.' I think that is very true, it has been quite an extraordinary nine months, but as a community we have faced the various changes together, supporting each other and working to do whatever we can to practice and share our faith. We should be grateful for everyone who works to put our covid safe liturgies together, not least the stewards and cleaners who help keep us sanitised and able to open for masses and private prayer on Sundays. On your behalf I would like to thank all our stewards and everyone who has worked tirelessly over these past six months to oversee the health and safety of our church. As your priest I can say Mass regularly for you but I cannot say a Public Mass without stewards on duty. Many thanks to everyone who helps keep the church open.

*O God from whom all blessings flow,
I turn to you in gratitude for this church of St. Bernadette,
for every faithful footstep taken within its walls,
and every petition prayed,
for every story shared,
the ordinary and the extraordinary
from generation to generation.
Thank you that in the silence of our absence
You were still here, as well as with your people.
As we now gather in Church slowly but surely once again,
grant to us all the wisdom to stay safe,
the comfort of your peace
and joy in coming home.
Let your Spirit flow out of me and all who come here,
bringing life, hope and healing
to our community.
Amen.*

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Jane McClelland, whose funeral I will celebrate at Carleton at noon today. *May she rest in peace.* Please keep her family in your prayers.

I hope you have a lovely penultimate day of the year!

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.