

Thursday December 31st, The Seventh 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.

And so we are now in Tier Four, but this still means that our Churches are open for public worship, with all the socially distancing precautions that we have in place, so masses will continue on Saturday at 5pm. Sunday at 10am, and Tuesday and Thursday at 12noon, with private prayer and exposition on Sundays from 12noon till 1pm. Additionally, there is a Mass tomorrow at 12noon for New Years Day, the Feast of Mary, Mother of God. Please keep up the prayers for everyone affected by the new Tier Four restrictions, and please follow all guidelines to keep yourselves, and everyone else, safe and healthy. And it's pretty icy out there this morning, so take care if you're stepping out!

A warning comes from St. John today about false prophets in I John 2:18-21. Many will come forward claiming to be Christ. Don't listen to them - you know the truth, you have been anointed by the Holy One. *'It is not because you do not know the truth that I am writing to you, but rather because you know it already, and know that no lie can come from the truth.'*

Our last Gospel of the Year is one of the most beautiful passages in the whole of the Scriptures (in my humble opinion). It is the Prologue to the Gospel of Saint John 1:1-18. The Word is God, the creator of the great world. The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us, and he has given us the power to become the children of God. John the Baptist was sent to prepare us for all that Jesus was to bring us. *'No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest to the father's heart, who has made him known.'* The Prologue of John's Gospel has been used as a blessing – for centuries it was prayed as a final blessing at the end of the Latin Mass. In the Byzantine liturgy it is read aloud at Easter in four languages as a solemn proclamation of the victory of God's light and love over all darkness and evil. Make it your own prayer of blessing and proclamation of God's love.

*Gracious Lord,
you have caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that,
encouraged and supported by your holy Word,
we may embrace and always hold fast the joyful hope of everlasting life.
Thank you Father for making yourself known to us,
showing us the way of salvation through faith in your Son,
for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

And for our carol today, let us have a 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen' which you might like to sing around this pic of our Christmas Tree on the sanctuary in Church

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlfHyb397VY>

And so it has been for everyone the most unprecedented year that we have ever known. Praying for health and wholeness in the New Year, let us commend 2021 to the Lord and our Blessed Mother, Mary. Tony and Susan sent me this prayer which they have composed which seems fitting as we fling away the old year, and with faith, hope and love look forward to the next.

Lord Jesus,

You said 'Whenever two or more of you are gathered in my name, I am there with you.'

And so we come together today Lord, as one voice, to beg your mercy and forgiveness,

And to be with us in this time of increasing danger from the devastating coronavirus,

Which is causing so many innocent people much suffering and emotional distress.

Lord Jesus, we are so desperately in need of your love and protection at this time.

As we celebrate together the wondrous joy of your birth'

Please let the light from the Star of Bethlehem

Be a healing light for our world, your creation, your people,

And bring us hope for a better year ahead and a brighter future.

Let the light of your love encourage your people

To live together in greater harmony and understanding,

And give us the strength to help each other through these most difficult times.

Thankyou Lord God for all your many gifts to us,

And grant us now that great gift of your healing,

So that we may once again come together as family, friends, and community,

United in the ever comforting knowledge of your love.

We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord,

Amen.

And many thanks to Tony and Susan for that beautiful prayer.

What happened to the man who shoplifted a calendar on New Year's Eve? He got 12 months! Ok, I promise not to make any bad jokes for the rest of the year...

Whatever you are doing this evening, let us simply pray for a Happy New Year. I'll see you in 2021!

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.