

Thursday April 30<sup>th</sup> Thursday in the Third Week of Eastertide

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the advice from the government and the medics about what we should be doing in this time of crisis.

And I hope everyone is praying together for our all our intentions in this time of need.

Good morning, on this miserable wet day. I don't think I'll be walking on the Prom this morning. Let's hope it clears up and those of us who can have a nice refreshing exercise walk later. Lots of mini things to talk about in today's message so I'll get started.

Firstly today's Scriptures. Continuing the Acts of the Apostles we jump to the fascinating account of the conversion of the Ethiopian court official by Philip (Acts 8:26-40). He was prepared for his baptism by his study of and reflection on the scriptures. We are told that when he asked Philip a question about the Messiah '*Philip proceeded to explain the Good News of Jesus to him.*' Throughout our lives, as well as learning and deepening the faith ourselves, there are many opportunities for us to explain the faith to people, who look upon us uncomprehending, or even with scorn. Let us firstly have a good knowledge of our faith, and secondly seek to explain the faith to others, with enthusiasm and joy, so that others too can come to know the Good News of Jesus. And remember what St. Francis of Assisi said – that we should preach the Gospel every moment of our lives, and occasionally use our mouths. So let today's hymn be 'God's Spirit Is In My Heart' with its rousing chorus 'Go tell ev'ryone the News of the Kingdom of God is come';

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-ibXHqsUTw>

In the Gospel (John 6:44-51) Jesus continues his discourse on the Eucharist. Listen to the teaching of the Father as foretold in the scriptures. '*I am the bread of life - and unlike the manna in the desert - this bread gives eternal life.*' He finishes with the most unusual statement that 'this bread is my flesh'. Slowly he is leading us to the Last Supper, developing our knowledge of him, until he gives himself to us in the Eucharist.

The final prayer of this morning's mass got me thinking. It reads:

*Graciously be present to your people we pray, O Lord,  
and lead those you have imbued with heavenly mysteries  
to pass from former ways to newness of life.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

I was thinking about the phrase *'newness of life.'* When all this is over (and how many times have we said that over the past couple of months) life will be different, there will indeed be a newness, and we really have to look on the positive things that have been happening and ensure we carry them on. Be it the way we are trying to stay in touch, the different ways we can find to serve one another, the clearness of air as there is less traffic, the gratefulness we are showing to our key workers, the recognition of how much we want to be able to hug each other. Let me know what you hope for in the *'newness of life'* which we will hopefully be experiencing in a positive way soon.

And today is the Memorial of Pope Saint Pius V. He was born in the sixteenth century in Northern Italy in the Piedmont area, joining the Dominicans. After being elected Pope in 1565 he set about enforcing decisions that had been made at the Council of Trent, publishing the first Catechism of the Catholic Faith, and revising the Missal we use at Mass and the Breviary which priests have to say every day. He is also known for excommunicating Queen Elizabeth I when she assumed the role of Supreme Governor of the Church in England. But chiefly we are grateful to him for his desire for us to celebrate Mass and pray in a more beautiful way:

*O God, who in your providence  
raised up Pope Saint Pius The Fifth in your Church  
that the faith might be safeguarded  
and more fitting worship be offered to you  
grant, though his intercession,  
that we may participate in your mysteries with lively faith and fruitful charity.  
Though Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Yesterday I had my first funeral at Lytham Crematorium since lockdown, and my goodness are they strict. The gates are closed and you have to show evidence that you are a Minister or Funeral Director. Mourners are counted at the gates and only ten people are allowed in – people cannot stand outside or listen to a broadcast of the funeral. And no-one is allowed in the grounds to visit or tend graves. Fortunately streaming is allowed. At the funeral yesterday, which was really lovely, I was told that had it not been for lockdown there would have been a requiem mass in Ireland, with hundreds of people. As it was the service was streamed live, and nearly four hundred people were watching in Ireland and the USA. God bless St. Isidore once again. Incidentally, when I got up to the pulpit there was a big sign saying *'CAUTION!!! YOU ARE BEING LIVE STREAMED!!!'* It made me wonder what they thought I was going to do...!

Don't forget to get out there and clap your hands, beep your horns, and clatter your pots and pans for the NHS and all our front line key workers at 8pm tonight. Yesterday I mailed a prayer that we could

say for our nurses. Today I found a prayer which can be said *by* nurses, which I think is rather beautiful:

*Dear Lord, please give me strength,*

*To face the day ahead.*

*Dear Lord, please give me courage,*

*As I approach each hurting bed.*

*Dear Lord, please give me wisdom*

*With every word I speak.*

*Dear Lord, please give me patience,*

*As I comfort the sick and weak.*

*Dear Lord, Please give me assurance,*

*As the day slips into night.*

*That I have done the best I can,*

*That I have done what's right.*

God bless them all at this time.

Continued thanks for the sponsorship and offerings that continue to come in (final total on Sunday). A number of people have emailed asking again for the bank details to make direct offerings. I asked Eileen and she texted the instructions:

This is the information you need re bank account. It is important that people use the term business account of: Parish of St Bernadette Blackpool

Sort code 40-27-02.

Account number 41334581. HSBC.

For Sunday offertory put name and initials in the reference box

Please note that tax can still be reclaimed on offerings made direct to the bank. Bless you all and heartfelt thanks for generosity in these straightened times.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Gerald McGowan, whose funeral I celebrated this morning at 8:30am. *May he rest in peace.* He was a big fan of Liverpool Football Club, so we concluded with 'You'll Never Walk Alone', the Gerry and the Pacemakers version. Incidentally, if you haven't listened to Colonel Tom and Michael Ball's version, please do – it is absolutely beautiful. And a Happy Birthday to Colonel Tom – a true inspiration who has captured the heart and spirit of the nation.

And now I'll pop in to school as it is 'School Dinner Distribution' day.

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. 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, though the building is; 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.