

Tuesday March 31st, Tuesday in the Fifth Week in Lent Year A.

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.

As we approach Holy Week the scripture readings are really pointing us towards the crucifixion. Today's first reading was from the Book of Numbers spoke of Moses lifting up the serpent in the desert and all who looked upon it were healed, and in the Gospel Jesus refers to the Son of Man being 'lifted up' taking us forward to Good Friday when Jesus was lifted up on the cross for the healing forgiveness of our sins. The crucifixion points us to the resurrection. Let us pray for the light in these darkened times.

As it's Tuesday tonight it is Rosary night, so I hope many of you will spiritually join me saying the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, for the intentions of the World at this time of crisis. The pandemic has given us many things to pray for, but also more time to pray, so let us take every opportunity we can. There are several YouTube videos of the rosary, and I found this one of the sorrowful mysteries <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsY9yaBsgls> Can I suggest for today's hymn the beautiful 'As I Kneel Before You', seeking the intercession of our blessed Mother Mary <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IOdUJRyFPM>

So yesterday I had my first funeral service at the Crematorium under the new restrictions. Only eighteen people were allowed into the chapel, and they had to observe social distancing, all seated separately. I felt especially sorry for the widow, who had to sit alone, without the immediate support of her family. Funerals are a time when we all need lots of hugs, and for a family unable to hug their mother and grandmother was heart-breaking. Today I have another service, for Mrs. Doreen Davies. Please say the *Eternal rest* for her, and keep her husband in your prayers.

This Sunday is Food Sunday. I received word the other day that the soup kitchen on Lytham Road that we serve every month is closed indefinitely, as is the homeless shelter in Blackpool. We've been informed that we can't go and hand out sandwiches as we did two weeks ago as that would encourage people together in groups. I'm hoping and trusting that the Local Councils are doing things for the homeless. The Women's Refuge we support has informed me they are very low on food too. I'm also

experiencing greater footfall at the presbytery door of people asking for bags of food, several 'newcomers' as well as my regulars. We also have several vulnerable families in our school who need support. Somehow we have to get food out there. If you are able in any way to bring some food to the porch or the house when you are on your exercise walk or doing your essential shopping it will be gratefully received and distributed the best way we can. Alternatively, financial donations can be dropped off into the presbytery letterbox and I can turn them into Tesco vouchers for families. Many thanks to those who have brought bags already. I understand these are hard times, and some basic items are proving hard to get, and incomes are being stretched, but if we can do anything to help those in need, let's try and do so. And if you yourself are in need, please give me a call. Many thanks in anticipation.

This Sunday is Palm Sunday. Any suggestions on how we can distribute palms? Cheers.

In other news, I have to report the disgraceful behaviour of Tobias, The Presbytery Cat. Yesterday I came down into the kitchen to discover he had ripped open and devoured a whole packet of treats. At least he had the grace to look a little guilty, as you can see in the photo...

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.