

Friday July 3rd, Feast of St. Thomas The Apostle

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 trust everyone continues to pray for all our needs at this time.

And don't doubt it, today is the Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle. Little is known about Thomas other than what we find in the gospels. He was a Jew and probably a Galilean. His name is Syriac and means the 'twin' - as does Didymus, which was his Greek name. He is chiefly remembered for his incredulity after Jesus had risen from the dead - *'unless I see the print of the nails in his hands I will not believe'* as recorded in the Gospel of Saint John 20:24-29. After his initial doubts, Thomas goes on to make a great profession of faith in, *'My Lord, and my God.'* Traditionally, he is said to have traveled outside the Roman Empire to preach the Gospel, traveling as far as India. According to tradition, the Apostle reached Muziris, India in 52 AD and baptized several people who are today known as Saint Thomas Christians or Nasranis. After his death, the reputed relics of Saint Thomas the Apostle were enshrined as far as Mesopotamia in the 3rd century, and later moved to various places. In 1258, some of the relics were brought to Abruzzo in Ortona, Italy, where they have been held in the Church of Saint Thomas the Apostle. He is regarded as the Patron Saint of India. Thomas, who probably suffered martyrdom as a result of preaching the Gospel, comforts us when our faith is weak, encourages us to persevere, and demonstrates that, as Pope benedict XVI said, *'every doubt can lead to an outcome brighter than any uncertainty.'*

*Heavenly Father, help us to develop a trust and faith in You
that reflects the simplicity of childlike faith that so rejoices Your heart,
and which is so evident in the lives of little children,
and yet which seems to evaporate into a vapour
as soon as we reach the age of maturity.*

*May we develop a wonder and an amazement at the glorious redemption story,
and a deep humility as we approach Your thrice-holy,
throne of grace to ask for help in time of need.*

Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

I always say: You've got to feel sorry for Thomas. We don't refer to Peter as 'the deny-er' or Paul 'the persecutor'. But they say 'Mud sticks', and there is some truth in the phrase, for there's poor Thomas, ever cast in the role of the doubter, rather than one who proclaimed his faith in 'My Lord,

and my God'. Jesus referred us to Thomas when he said, 'Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.' Thomas went on to bring Christ to those who had not seen, but through his witness were to believe. If we have doubts, let us share the openness of Thomas to the peace and presence of Christ. If we have faith, let us experience something of his missionary zeal, and share that faith with all.

*Grant, almighty God,
that we may glory in the Feast of the blessed Apostle Thomas,
so that we may always be sustained by his intercession
and, believing, may have life
in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son,
whom Thomas acknowledged as the Lord and God.
and proclaim him by our deeds and by our life.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.*

'For All the Saints, Who from their Labours Rest.' would make an exuberant hymn today

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OaBgaMcOvM>

Yesterday I had a meeting with the stewards who will enable the opening up of the Church for Mass this weekend. Firstly, can I thank all those who have volunteered to steward, to clean down after masses, to help with reading and serving and working in the sacristy, and to Warren for ensuring that we strictly follow all the health and safety rules. I know for a fact that other parishes are finding it hard to find any volunteers at all, so we are truly blessed with people coming forward here at SBs's. My heartfelt thanks and blessings.

So this weekend we begin Masses, but they will not be Mass as we know it, and we have strict instructions to follow. Mass will be celebrated at 5pm on Saturday evening, 10am on Sunday Morning, and 12noon on Tuesday and Thursday. The 12noon mass on Tuesday has been designated a particular mass for our elderly and more vulnerable and our taxi run parishioners, organized by the SVP, during which communion will be brought to people in their pews, rather than coming forward. Church will be open twenty minutes before Mass, and people will not be able to stay after Mass. Only fifty people are allowed at any one Mass, and people will be directed to sanitise, give their name and phone number, and fill up the Church from the front, and leave at the end, from the back, as directed by the stewards. We have been instructed to make the masses very simple and brief, with no homilies or bidding prayers. Communion will be ministered at the top of each aisle, and you will be instructed when to come up by a steward. No group singing is aloud, as this is said to contribute to the spread of covid, but I will sing a hymn certainly at the start of the Saturday 5pm Mass which will be videoed and put up on the YouTube the following day for the week.

This week there will be no opening for private prayer as we all want to see how the first week of Masses goes, and whether should have more, or different times, a mass for families or whatever or other times for opening, remembering that all these times need to be staffed by volunteers. This week will be very much an experiment to see how we get along, what sort of numbers we are dealing with etc., so please bear with us, and please follow the instructions we have been issued with. And please come along! It's a step in the right direction to the new normality that is emerging.

Yesterday was quite a day as I went with Box Brothers to Manchester for a funeral in Southern Cemetery. The place was absolutely vast, and the chapel for the service more than a little grim. Grimmer still was the journey back – travelling down the M60 in a hearse at one point doing 100 miles per hour!

In other news I received the attached photo from my Australian family the other day, a picture of my nephew Pat watching Gordon Ramsey's Kitchen Nightmares – with the episode being set in Blackpool! And following on from yesterday's discussion of aptronyms, where your name is appropriate for your job, my sister informed me this is also known as 'Nominative Determinism' and that in Australia they have a high court judge called Lord Peter Judge. And parishioner Eileen Burns reminded me that she is a Cremation Organizer, as is Helen Ashmore in Cleveleys! There you go.

Mass for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul is available on the YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6N4h8PodpVA&feature=youtu.be>

The official link for the Mass Sheet is

<https://www.rpbooks.co.uk/uploads/www.rpbooks.co.uk/15SsPeterPaul.pdf>

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, though the building is, most of the time. 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.

