

Tuesday May 5th, Tuesday in the Fifth 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.

I managed my walk in the afternoon on the prom, and it was lovely to bump into Meg Whittam and have a good chat, and a discussion about how we can help those who are feeling a bit down at this time – more about that in another message. Whilst walking I listened to 'Starmania' on the iPod, another terrible French Rock Musical from the 1990's. Why I have so many terrible French Rock Musicals I don't know. I don't even know what it's about as the plot is unfathomable. And I don't speak French, other than holiday necessities such as 'une cruche de vin blanc s'il vous plait' and 'pizza'. They make good walking music though – as you're desperate to get your walk over so you can be back in time for Tipping Point.

In the scriptures today we continue our reading of the Acts of the Apostles. Today's reading (Acts 11:19-26) is hugely important in the history of the Church, so much so that I'm going to quote it in full:

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to preach to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians'.

There's a lot to think about in this reading. Firstly, despite persecution, and losing their homes and being scattered, the faith of these first disciples is only the stronger for all of their difficulties. With all the tribulations they are undergoing, they still constantly go on preaching the faith. Secondly, despite

Jesus constantly telling the Apostles to ‘Go out, and preach to all the Nations’ here we finally see that actually happening, as the Gospel moves out of the Jewish world, represented by Jerusalem, to the Gentile world, as the Gospel is now being preached to the Greeks, who hear and understand and come to profess the faith themselves. Here we are seeing people without a Jewish background, and without knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures, come to accept the teaching of Christ. I love the fact that when word gets back to Jerusalem about all this they send Barnabus up to see what’s going on - it’s as if they are not sure about this new-fangled preaching to the Gentiles. But fortunately Barnabus, who is given a lovely write-up by St. Luke about this character, understands that the Church must preach to whoever has ears to listen – which they do with wondrous results. And finally it is here in Antioch that the disciples are called ‘Christians’ for the first time, proud to wear the name of Christ to define themselves.

There’s a lot for us take from this. We too should be proud to wear the name of Christ from the moment of our Baptisms when we were first welcomed into God’s family. We should always be prepared to act out and preach the teachings of the Church, even to the most unlikely of peoples, that they may recognise in us what it means to be a Christian. We should not be cynical about different new-fangled ways and means of preaching the Gospel – look how the internet, for example, has been such a boon to spreading God’s Word and keeping the faithful together at this time. And finally let us ask God to help us in these times of trials and tribulation that our faith should not fail or be shaken, but in fact strengthened and deepened, encouraging us to share with others the presence of Christ in our lives – even, perhaps especially, in our darkest moments.

So let’s profess ourselves to do God’s will, and stand up and be counted as we sing ‘Here, I am Lord’, vowing to go wherever God’s leads us in his name:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcXOkht8w7c>

As I’m writing this message Sammy the Shammy, the presbytery window cleaner, is outside cleaning the windows. I wondered who the Patron Saint of Window Cleaners and apparently it is St. Clare – because her name means ‘clear vision’. For that reason she is also Patron Saint of Television. There is also this lovely ‘Prayer of The Window Cleaner’, but I think it applies to a lot more than that noble profession:

*Oh, God, when I have food,
help me to remember the hungry;
when I have windows to clean,
help me to remember the jobless;
when I have a warm home,
help me to remember the homeless;*

*when I am without pain,
help me to remember those that suffer;
and remembering, help me
to destroy my complacency
and bestir my compassion.
Make me concerned enough
to help, by word and deed,
those who cry out
for what I take for granted.*

What a wonderful prayer for these times. And cheers to Sammy the Shammy for clean windows, and some inspiration for this message!

It's the month of May so I hope we are especially praying the Rosary at this time, but as it is Tuesday when we would usually have devotions, let's all try and pray them today, for the intercessions of the world at this time.

And yes, the photo from my room in Rome actually was our esteemed choir mistress, Madame Kath Pickup! Bravo to her for being such a good sport. She says she remembers dancing on the tables but not singing! Somebody has pointed out to me that it was unfair to send a picture of her from that night thirty-three years ago, but not one of me. Unfortunately I don't have one of me on that night, but, in the interests of fairness here is a picture of me from that time. It was taken during my first week in Rome, September 1987, at the first Papal Audience my year attended, and despite the best efforts of the evil Italian Nun with the sharpened elbows next to me, I was blessed to shake the hand of a future Saint.

Please pray the *Eternal Rest* for Edward McGlone, whose funeral service I will be celebrating at Carleton at 12:30pm this afternoon. *May he rest in peace.* There was some suggestion on the news this morning that we may be able to start having funeral services in our own churches with the appropriate social distancing, so let's keep up the prayers for that.

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.