

Sunday July 5<sup>th</sup>, Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year II

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.

Well I write this after we have celebrated our first two public masses in church for almost four months. And what great celebrations they were! Although we have to keep things calm and quiet, I still managed to sing a hymn at the beginning, we had beautiful organ music from Stephan to see us through communion, and a really good socially distanced crowd gathered. The atmosphere was one of pure joy, and not a little emotion. The stewards and cleaners did a great job, and we learned a couple of things for a future masses to help them go even more smoothly. There is room for more at each mass, as family bubbles (husband and wife, grandparents and granddaughter for example) count as one person so can sit together, so don't be put off thinking you might be turned away. Social distancing and safety was paramount, and a good job was done by all. It was such a great start and so lovely to see everyone, and once more St. Bernadette's can slowly be coming back together and grow, in this 'new normality' in love for God and one another.

*Dear Father,*

*Today I thank you for my Church.*

*While some might think of doors and windows and statues,*

*I'm praising you for spirits and hearts,*

*for people whose lives you have joined together*

*made more remarkable through your grace.*

*I can't praise you enough for the unique way*

*you have blended the talents of individuals*

*into a beautiful masterpiece of joy.*

*May we love one another to the fullest*

*and be evidence of your ultimate love,*

*to advance the work of your kingdom.*

*Through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

Public Masses will continue on Tuesday at noon, which is a special mass for the more vulnerable and elderly, and also with Mass at Thursday at noon. Continued thanks to everyone who is making it possible to open up for Mass, you are an amazing team of self-giving people. 'Give Me Joy in my Heart Keep Me Praising' seems a good hymn to start us off today!

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

And what a joyful Gospel this weekend to come together for the first time in so many months, to celebrate the Eucharist and listen to the word of God. In Matthew 11:25-30 Jesus prays joyfully to his Father that mere children are listening to him and accepting his word. The learned and the clever, that is, the scribes and the Pharisees, have rejected the teaching of Jesus. These men are weighed down by the burden of the Law, or rather by their detailed keeping of the externals, the rules and regulations of the Jewish Law. They gave keeping of the law consideration above everything. They may have been experts in the Word of God, yet had misunderstood the message of God's word, not recognising the coming of the Messiah, not accepting the truth of the teaching of Jesus, taking the Word of God only to their minds and never to their hearts. The people who are listening to the teaching of Jesus and accepting his word are the social outcasts, the religious nonentities, those who are ignorant of the Law, those down at heart who are truly open to the Word of God in mind and in heart. These are the children who, above the learned and the clever, recognise Jesus as the Messiah, and, following his instruction, learn from him.

And rather than offering the people the burden of a series of laws and regulations to follow, Jesus offers them himself as the way one comes to know the Father. Jesus shows himself to be the way to God. And as he is the Word of God incarnate, Jesus words are himself, hence his teaching is to call people to be like him, to be gentle, to be humble, to acknowledge their need of God. Only when we admit that we need the presence of God in our lives can we find rest for our souls, for only then can we truly experience God's love and mercy. *'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'*

*God our Father,*

*Thank you that your yoke is easy and your burden is light.*

*Thank you that you promise to give the worried, the hurried, the pressured, and stressed out rest and peace for our souls.*

*Thank you that you already know all that concerns us, and you care.*

*We're so grateful for your reminder that we don't have to carry it all on our own.*

*Forgive us for the times that we've tried to fix things in our own power, for not taking the time to rest, or coming to you first with our needs and burdens.*

*Thank you for the refreshing that comes from your Spirit,*

*filling us with joy, covering us with a shield, leading us forward with hope.*

*Equip us to be those who take notice of others who seem weary and burdened too*

*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Saturday evening's Mass was videoed and is available on the YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEsxdhrGY6U&feature=youtu.be>

You'll see that it is slightly different from the previous Masses, as it could not be recorded so closely, but I think you'll find it a joy to hear the congregation answering the prayers. I certainly did. After the mass I recorded the morning prayer video for the our children in school, and it was great to have our congregation in the background helping to pray along with the children. If you want to look at some of these little videos they are on the school website on their Faith Page. Many thanks for your continued offerings, which are gratefully received at this time. And I attach a picture of the beautiful Altar Flowers for our first public Mass.

It's a lovely day, though a bit blustery, so have a lovely Sunday and great week.

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.