

Wednesday May 6<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday 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, the Light, have come into the world, so that whoever believes in me need not stay in the dark anymore,'* says Jesus in today's Gospel (John 12:44-50). There is a lot of darkness around at the moment with present pandemic, and more than ever we have to ask the Light that is Jesus to be with us in our lives, especially in our darkest moments.

*Heavenly Father,*

*We thank You that You are never overcome by darkness.*

*Even the darkest night is as bright as the brightest day to You.*

*Thank You that as we walk with You, learning to walk in Your ways,*

*seeking Your divine presence in our lives moment by moment,*

*these darkest of times will dissipate,*

*and the night around us will be like day once again.*

*Thank You that You promise us that together we will shine again.*

*As You transform our lives, deliver us from these present challenges  
that seek to overwhelm and destroy us;*

*rather than being overwhelmed and brought down low,*

*let these challenges be the making of us,*

*so that together we will become stronger and a brighter light for Your glory.*

*Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

In these times, let us continue to look to all the pinpricks of light in this darkened world, and all the wonderful acts of kindness despite, or perhaps, because of the times we find ourselves in. And let's look forward the 'Sunny Day' when 'We'll Meet Again'. To that end, let us pledge to stay united as we all sing 'Bind Us Together' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cESUZkIiKE>

A very busy day yesterday; Mass first thing in the morning, then writing The Message, followed by a visit to the school (fifteen pupils in yesterday). After that I had a funeral service at Carleton, and then went to visit – at a social distance – my Spiritual Director. All priests have – or should have – a Spiritual Director (I'm Spiritual Director to a Permanent Deacon) who you visit perhaps once a

month, for an hour or two, to talk things through with, perhaps pray or meditate with, and generally discuss anything that's on your mind or where you are. It's an incredible help to me, and hugely important. After that there were a lot of funeral calls to be made – preparing funerals without meeting families is really difficult and complicated. After that I wrote up the funeral service for today and by that time the day had gone. I didn't even get my walk on the prom – which at least meant I didn't have to listen to 'Autant en Emporte le Vent,' a French Rock Musical version of 'Gone With The Wind'. And if you think I'm making that up, the whole show, in French, is on the YouTube!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqpaAHZ1WoU>

Earlier this week I watched my Mate Fr. Ed's Sunday mass from his parish in Lincoln. It struck me that I probably haven't heard Ed preach for twenty-six years. Ed and I share an Ordinary Anniversary, but he was ordained one year before me. It's tradition to ask a priest friend to preach at your first Mass, and Ed did the honours for me, outside at the Grotto in Cleator, Cumbria on July 18<sup>th</sup> 1994, on a beautiful summer's evening, with the Fells of the Lake District in the background – I'll attach a picture. Twenty five years later I did the honours for Ed at his Twenty-fifth Anniversary Mass in Lincoln. So it's a long time since I've heard Ed preach ... but I know well a sermon that he preached once – because I wrote it. A few years ago Ed and I were on a plane coming back from a holiday somewhere. Now whenever I go away, I always make sure that everything is ready for the weekend that I return - newsletter ready, bidding prayers, that sort of thing. So we're sitting on the plane, with a gin and tonic (obviously), and Ed leans over to me and says, 'Have you done any bidding prayers for this weekend?' I said, 'Yeah'. He says, 'you couldn't email them to me, could you?' 'Yeah'. Another gin and tonic. 'Have you written a sermon for this weekend?' 'Yeah.' 'You couldn't email it to me?' 'Yeah.' And I did. I've got to say though that my sermons are somewhat different to Ed's, as are all our sermons, because they reflect our own, individual personalities as priests. So, as you'll know, my sermons are filled with cultural references, musical quotes, and generally one or two mentions of Elaine Paige. So Ed gets up, in Leicester I think, to preach my sermon. However, he did admit to his congregation that he hadn't actually written the sermon, and that it had been written by me, but he also said that to make it sound more like one of his sermons, if every time the words 'Elaine Paige' appear they replace it with 'The England Cricket Team' it'll sound as though he had written it. And so Ed preached my sermon. Though how his congregation got their heads round the English Cricket team dressed as cats singing 'Memory' I'll never know.

Anyway, having watched Ed's Mass on the YouTube, which he prerecords, it strikes me that as this Corona Lockdown is set to go on a while, particularly with regards to Churches, it's about time I got in on this recording malarkey. To that end I'm prepared to record a Sunday Mass each weekend and put it somewhere on the Internet. The fact is, I don't have a clue how, so I'm putting this out there to ask for help to do it. I have an iPad, and offer of a videographer, but how I then get it out there I have

no clue. We don't have wifi in the Church, though we do have it in the presbytery. So I'm asking for help in doing this. If anyone knows please explain it to me, or come and socially distance set it up here in the presbytery. **Over to you!**

Thank you for the lovely comments regarding the photo of my meeting Pope Saint John Paul II. I had the honour of meeting him three times, actually singing for him at one of his private masses which was a great honour. Somebody did say, though, that it was a bit unfair of me to publish a picture of Kath Pickup with a cocktail on my bed, and then the equivalent one of me Thirty four years ago being one of me meeting a Saint, and they were sure there must be a photo of me with a glass in my hand. Well, there are. Several actually. Well, you asked for it. When I was at The English College each corridor used to have its own Christmas Party (a bit like a street party), so I attach a picture from my first Christmas party there, December 1987. Who would have thought that the two young boys in the attached picture would both grow up to be Parish Priests of the erstwhile establishment that is known as St. Bernadette's?

Please pray the *Eternal Rest* for Rita Walker, whose funeral service I will be celebrating at Preston New Cemetery at 1:30pm this afternoon. *May she rest in the peace of Christ.*

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.