

Monday July 6th, Monday in Week Fourteen 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.

A lovely, but blustery day again. Later I will holding a full funeral graveside service in Lytham, so here's hoping the rain holds off, as at Lytham you are not allowed a chapel service then burial, the whole service has to be graveside. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Victor Hankinson. *May he rest in the peace and love of Christ.*

This week we begin a reading of passages from the Old Testament Prophet Hosea, the second of the twelve minor prophets. Hosea lived around the same time as Amos, whose words we read last week, some years before the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel. It was a time of great instability and crisis for Israel. His oracles are in the form of very beautiful poetry, and he mainly attacks the idolatry of the people. They had turned their backs on the God who saved them and made a covenant with them. In the first part Hosea uses his marriage in a metaphorical way. He married one who was a prostitute, who had taken part in pagan fertility rites. She had three unhappy children. Israel had behaved in a similar way and had done evil things. But there is hope. The day will come when his wife - and Israel - will return to the master, away from the despicable pagan rites and back to integrity, justice, love and tenderness. *'I will betroth you to myself for ever, betroth you with integrity and justice, with tenderness and love; I will betroth you to myself with faithfulness, and you will come to know the Lord.'* You can hear the Song of Hosea at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FB0TWvag_lc

In our Gospel today, Matthew 9:18-26, we have two healing stories, that of the daughter of Jairus, and the extraordinary story of the woman who has had a blood disorder all her life. She dares not speak to Jesus, but has so much faith that she knows that even if she only touches Jesus' cloak she will be cured. She does so, and Jesus immediately turns to her and says, *'Courage, my daughter, your faith has restored you to health.'* Faith is always at the heart of Jesus' miracle stories, with him sometimes berating people for their lack of faith, but many times so happy that people have such faith in the power of God. Faith has a lot of synonyms. We have trust, confidence, conviction, reliance, alliance, and credence. All of these words are positive, , and this is why we should constantly renew our faith in God, perhaps especially in these uncertain times;

*Heavenly Father, please strengthen our faith,
and remind us to encourage one another*

*when the troubles of life start to overwhelm us.
Please guard our hearts from depression.
Give us the strength up to rise up each day
and fight against the struggles which seek to weigh us down.
Increase our faith in you,
strengthen our belief in your miracles,
and heal us, and heal the world. Amen.*

Today let's all sing 'Lord Of All Hopefulness' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-D_aT8CXyc

Today's Saint is Maria Goretti, 1890-1902, who was born in Corinaldo near Ancona in central Italy. She was the third of six children, known for her cheerfulness and piety. At the age of twelve she was subject to a vicious attack by a man named Alessandro, who eventually stabbed her three times. She managed to return home and her family found her bleeding on the floor, and immediately took her to hospital. Unfortunately, her wounds were beyond the surgeon's ability to help. Halfway through the surgery, the man asked her, 'Maria, think of me in Paradise.' As she lay on the table, she looked up at him and said, 'Well, who knows which of us is going to be there first?' She did not realize how terrible her situation was, and the surgeon replied, 'You, Maria.' She said, 'Then I will think gladly of you.' The next day, Maria forgave Alessandro and said she wanted to see him in Heaven with her, shortly before she died of her injuries.

Alessandro remained unrepentant for his actions until he had a dream that he was in a garden. Maria was there and gave him lilies, which immediately burned in his hands. When he woke, he was a changed man. He repented his crime and lived a reformed life. When he was released 27-years-later, he went directly to Maria's mother and begged her forgiveness, which she gave, saying, 'If my daughter can forgive him, who am I to withhold forgiveness?'

Maria was beatified by Pope Pius XII in a ceremony at Saint Peter's Basilica on April 27, 1947. Three years later, on June 24, 1950, Maria was declared a saint and Alessandro was present in the St. Peter's to celebrate her canonization. He later became a lay brother of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, where he lived in a monastery and worked as its receptionist and gardener until his death

*O God, author of innocence and love of chastity,
who bestowed the grace of martyrdom on your handmaid,
the virgin Saint Maria Goretti in her youth,
grant, we pray, through her intercession,
that, as you gave her a crown for her steadfastness,
so we, too, may be firm in obeying your commandments.
Through our Lord, Jesus Christ, you Son,*

*who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever. Amen.*

Maria's descendants ran a fish restaurant in Ancona, and as students in Rome we used to walk to Ancona from the College's summer villa overlooking Lake Albano, and visit the restaurant. I attach a pic of me taken hundreds of years ago at the English College Villa, Palazzola, and behind me you can just make out the woods we would walk through to get to Ancona. The Scampi Risotto was amazing!

Don't forget we have mass tomorrow at 12noon, especially for the elderly and vulnerable as well as Mass on Thursday at 12noon, too. I look forward to seeing some of you there.

Saturday evening's Mass was videoed and is available on the YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEsxdhrGY6U&feature=youtu.be>

Make the most of today, and tomorrow might be even better.

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.