

Tuesday July 7<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday 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.

Blustery again today, but not so lovely. Got drenched this morning just running across to Tesco to get some milk for my Tea! Hey ho. The weather for the funeral service at Lytham was beautiful yesterday, a full thirty minute service with music at the graveside, indeed some of these graveside services, with the sun, a lovely warm breeze, and the birds singing, have been much nicer than going in to a dusty old crematorium chapel. Although I still say that nothing beats a good old fashioned requiem Mass, although, alas, it will still be some time before they can be celebrated.

Today Hosea 4-7.11-13 gives a powerful denunciation of the idolatrous practices of the Israelites. Politically, they have ignored God. Religiously they have blasphemed God. *'Because they sow the wind, they will reap the whirlwind; their wheat will yield no ear, their ear will yield no flour, or, if it does, foreigners will swallow it.'* The Lord will remember their iniquity and punish their sins and they will be back to their pre-Exodus days.

And there's a lot going on in this morning's Gospel, Matthew :32-38, Firstly Jesus heals a mute demoniac, who as the devil is cast out begins to speak. The reaction of the crowd is total amazement and wonderment, but the Pharisees grasp it as another opportunity to question the authority of Jesus. After this Jesus makes a tour through the towns and villages, curing, exorcizing and preaching, *'and when he saw the crowds he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples "The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest"'*

*'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few,'* is a phrase often used when praying for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, but it applies equally to a prayer that we have an active laity, with people generously offering their time to serve the Parish, and God and his Church. As we slowly come out of lockdown, more than ever are we going to need volunteers willing to take up various roles in the Parish. Certainly the response to helping steward our services as we begin public masses was wonderful, and I know that that has not always been the case in other places.

But equally, we should make a prayer for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. There are far fewer active priests around today, and the situation is only going to get worse. And as priests have to

start looking after more parishes, schools and Churches, more than ever is an active response to help from the laity in our parish and diocese needed. In his prayer for the month of May, Pope Francis said laypeople are on the 'front lines' of the Church's life and activities, and asked Catholics of all states and vocations to pray for the laity and their mission. 'Laypeople are on the front line of the life of the Church,' the pope said, urging the Church to be thankful for the laity 'who take risks, who are not afraid and who offer reasons for hope to the poorest, to the excluded, to the marginalized.' Let's pray that we can each find the best way to serve God in different ways, working together for the glory of his kingdom.

*O Lord, our God,*

*You called Your people to be Your Church.*

*As they gather together in Your Name, may they love, honour,  
and follow Your Son to eternal life in the Kingdom He promised.*

*Let their worship always be sincere,*

*and help them to find Your saving Love in the Church and its Sacraments.*

*Fill with the Spirit of Christ those whom You call*

*to live in the midst of the world and its concern.*

*Help them by their work on earth to build up Your eternal Kingdom.*

*May they be effective witnesses to the Truth of the Gospel*

*and make Your Church a living presence in the midst of the world.*

*Increase the gifts You have given Your Church*

*that Your faithful people may continue to grow in holiness*

*and in imitation of Your Beloved Son.*

*Through the same Christ Our Lord.*

*Amen.*

And a prayer for vocations to the priesthood:

*Almighty and merciful Father,*

*you inspire and bring to fulfilment every good intention.*

*Guide your people in the way of salvation*

*and watch over those who shepherd your flock*

*and those who have left all things to follow you.*

*Raise up worthy ministers for your altars,*

*ardent but gentle servants of the Gospel,*

*and generous souls who renounce worldly power and profit*

*to serve you and their brothers and sisters faithfully*

*in the spirit of poverty and humility.*

*Inspire our young men and women to respond to your call*

*so that your Church might always rejoice  
in plentiful servants for your harvest.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

And purely because we haven't sung it for a while, let's all lift up our voices and sing 'Shine, Jesus Shine.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr5Y63bDNNg> And we might pray that the sun will shine again soon, too!

Today we have mass at noon, as we always did before lockdown. At this mass people who often come to Sunday mass in SVP taxis are being catered for, as well as some of our elderly and more vulnerable parishioners, including those who come to the SVP coffee morning. At this Mass I will walk round ministering Holy Communion, wearing a Mass to avoid people having to move. We all have to be very creative and open to very different liturgies as restrictions are slightly lifted but not fully back to normal, however and whenever and whatever that will be. But what a joy it is to be hearing responses at mass again!

In other news, for the children's prayer today, Tobias, the Presbytery Cat joined me. He has been rather grumpy that he hasn't had many photos in The Message recently, and was determined to get back in on the act.

Despite the weather, I hope you all have a lovely day, and I'll report back on today's noontide mass tomorrow.

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

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.