

Wednesday July 8<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday 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.

Bit of a dull day today, but at least the rain seems to be holding off for the moment. Definitely up for a brisk walk along the prom after I've finished writing this. But what do I listen to?

More doom and gloom is forecast for the Israelites by Hosea 10:1-3. 7-8. They were once gifted by God, but they rejected him and turned to worship of fertility gods instead. Their kingdom will be destroyed and the people will be so afraid that they will want the mountains to cover them. However, there is hope if they return to their former ways of integrity, justice, and actively seeking the Lord for his salvation. Despite Hosea's forbidding warnings, he always offers hope, and always offers it in the most beautiful, poetic way:

*'Sow integrity for yourselves,  
reap a harvest of kindness,  
break up your fallow ground:  
it is time to go seeking the Lord,  
until he comes to rain salvation on you.'*

In today's Gospel, Matthew 10:1-7, the apostles are named and sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Their first mission may have been to the Jewish people, but after the Ascension, they all travelled far and wide to preach the risen Christ, and all but one were martyred.

Peter, leader of the Apostles, passionate, emotional, impetuous, martyred in Rome about 66 AD, during the persecution under Emperor Nero, crucified, upside down at his request, since he did not feel he was worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

Andrew, Peter's brother, went to Russia, and Christians there claim him as the first to bring the gospel to their land. He also preached in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, and in Greece, where he is said to have been crucified on the 'x' shaped cross, which gives Scotland its flag.

James, the son of Zebedee, was the first of the apostles to be martyred, and the only one whose death is mentioned in the New Testament. 'Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.'

John, the only one of the apostles to have died a natural death from old age. He was the leader of the church in the Ephesus area and is said to have taken care of Mary the mother of Jesus in his home, as requested by Jesus on the cross. During Domitian's persecution in the middle '90s, he was

exiled to the island of Patmos. There he is credited with writing the last book of the New Testament, the Book of Revelation, or Apocalypse.

Philip had a powerful ministry in Carthage in North Africa and then in Asia Minor, where he converted the wife of a Roman proconsul. In retaliation the proconsul had Philip arrested and cruelly put to death.

Bartholomew had widespread missionary travels attributed to him by tradition: to India with Thomas, back to Armenia, and also to Ethiopia and Southern Arabia. There are various accounts of how he met his death as a martyr for the Gospel.

Thomas, whose feast we celebrated last week (and who I am *not* going to call ‘the Doubter), was most active in the area east of Syria. Tradition has him preaching as far east as India, where the ancient Marthoma Christians revere him as their founder. They claim that he died there when pierced through with the spears of four soldiers.

Matthew, the tax collector and writer of the first Gospel ministered in Persia and Ethiopia. Some of the oldest reports say he was stabbed to death in Ethiopia.

James the son of Alpheus is reckoned to have ministered in Syria. The Jewish historian Josephus, who gives us some historically accurate reporting about the time of Christ, reported that he was stoned and then clubbed to death.

Thaddeus, or Jude, According to the tradition of the Christians in Armenia, Jude was martyred about 65AD together with the apostle Simon the Zealot. Patron Saint of hopeless cases, for many years he was ignored, by people, confusing him with Judas Iscariot.

Simon the Zealot, one of a band of fiercely patriotic Jews who were dedicated to removing the Roman occupiers from their land, by whatever means, ministered in Persia and was killed after refusing to sacrifice to the sun god.

And finally, Judas Iscariot, who was to betray Jesus.

We should add Matthias, the apostle chosen to replace Judas. Tradition sends him to Syria with Andrew and to death by burning.

*Lord, eternal Shepherd, you do not desert your flock,*

*but through the blessed Apostles*

*watch over it and protect it always.*

*For you have built your Church*

*to stand firm on Apostolic foundations.*

*to be a lasting sign of your holiness on earth,*

*and offer all humanity your heavenly teaching.*

*Through the intercession of your chosen,*

*May your Church continue to preach your Word,*

*and bring us all to the fullness of heaven.*

*Though Christ our Lord. Amen.*

And let's sing together 'For All the Saints, Who From Their Labours Rest'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OaBgaMcOvM>

Yesterday's twelve noon mass, especially organized by the SVP, but of course open to everyone, was absolutely beautiful, and it was so good to see our lovely parishioners all together, and it was warm smiles all round. In the afternoon I received an email which said, '*Thanks Fr. Peter. Noonday Mass was lovely. Great to be back in church and see so many familiar faces. Also many thanks to Christine Hulme for organizing the taxis. She was there when we arrived and with Mel Sharples greeted the people, showed them where to sit, and it went very smoothly. And you had Gerry to set up and Paul to serve. A magnificent job was done by all including yourself. Everyone I am sure appreciated it, not to forget the cleaners after Mass. Well done.*' And I heartily agree with all of that. I attach a pic of the mass. If it looks as if not everyone is socially distancing, remember that couples and families can sit together as they are a 'bubble'. Just so good to see everyone. All are welcome to Mass on Thursday at noon, too, and of course, Saturday at 5pm and Sunday at 10am.

*Lord, my Church is one of the most important things in my life,*

*because it brings me closer to you, and to my fellow parishioners.*

*I ask for your blessings on it, and I lift it up to you.*

*Thank you, Lord, for allowing me to be a part of this congregation,  
and a part of you.*

*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

And now for my walk, and a pop into school to see how things are going. Next week I will be celebrating end of term masses for St. Bernadette's and Holy Family on the school playing fields, so pray for some better weather. And whatever you're doing today, make the best of it.

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.