

Friday July 10th, Friday 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.

And we wake up to what seems to be a rather lovely day, if again, somewhat blustery. I'm glad it's not raining as today I'm trekking over to Preston to have a meeting with the Vicar General. That might sound something sort of grandish, but he has suggested we meet in Wetherspoons, so it can't be all that serious. I was looking forward to a meat-feast pizza, but then I remembered that it is Friday, so I'll stick with a Margarita. They also do a 'Carbonara' pizza which sounds so deliciously revolting it might actually be revoltingly delicious. But it's probably got bacon in it so that's a no no for Friday. Hey hoo.

In today's first reading we have our last extract from the beautiful, haunting book of Hosea 14:2-10 and at the end of the book we have a very optimistic section. The Lord says to Israel: *'Come back to the Lord your God, take all iniquity away, offer words of praise. Then I will love them with all my heart. I will give them my divine gift of life - symbolised by the dew, Israel will bloom like the lily, will have the beauty of the olive, will come back to live in my shade.'*

In our Gospel Matthew 10:16-23 Jesus gives more instructions to his apostles. They must not be afraid of what to say - the Spirit of his Father will be with them. But as always Jesus does not shy away from informing the disciples of the troubles they will endure in preaching the Gospel of Christ, *'I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.'*

Yesterday at mass a parishioner mentioned to me that she is so enjoying these little explanations of each day's Scriptures. The last words of the book of Hosea encourage us to get to know a better understanding of the Word of God:

*Let the wise man understand these words.
Let the intelligent man grasp their meaning.
For the ways of the Lord are straight,
and virtuous men walk in them,
but sinners stumble.*

Let us pray for a greater understanding of God's Word, and pledge ourselves to more keenly read and reflect upon the Scriptures.

Gracious Lord,

*you have caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning
help us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them,
that, encouraged and supported by your holy Word,
we may embrace and always hold fast the joyful hope of everlasting life
Heavenly Father, give us faith to receive your word,
understanding to know what it means,
and the will to put it into practice;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

I believe that you have been enjoying learning about the Saints in the Church's calendar through these messages. There are only a couple of Saints in the English and Welsh Church's Calendar this week, but if we were using the Irish Church calendar we would have been celebrating Saint Moninne, who was baptized by St. Patrick and had a famous well which you can still visit in Killeevy, and Saint Killian, who was a seventh century Bishop who did lots of missionary work in Germany. And if we were in Scotland, yesterday we'd have been celebrating Our Lady of Aberdeen. When I first saw this feast in the missal I thought I'm sure Our Lady never appeared in Aberdeen – and if she had done it might be a lot easier than pilgrimming all the way to Lourdes. But actually Our Lady of Aberdeen is a statue of Mary holding the child Jesus which was saved from destruction in Aberdeen during the Reformation. For sixty-five years, it was hidden until it was shipped to safety somewhere in Europe, ending up in Spain. Despite her intention to keep the statue in the Royal Palace, the Infanta of Spain, the Archduchess Isabella, was persuaded to place it in the newly built Augustinian church in Brussels. The statue remained in this church until 1796, when it was again removed for protection into private hands, this time to escape the ravages of the French Revolution. An Englishman, John Morris, safely restored it to the Augustinians in 1805 and it remained in their care as an object of devotion until 1814 when it was removed to the neighbouring Church of Our Lady of Finisterre. It is still venerated there as Our Lady of Good Success. Since the Restoration of the Scottish Hierarchy in 1878, devotion to Our Blessed Lady in Aberdeen, throughout the diocese, the whole of Scotland, and further afield, has focused on copies of this ancient statue including one in the cathedral of Aberdeen, St. Mary's. So no, Our Lady has not appeared in Scotland, and though even the original statue is not in Scotland itself, this is the official prayer:

*Our Lady of Aberdeen, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven,
we thank you for your intercession on our behalf in the past.
With renewed confidence we turn to you again
asking that you may through your Son,
help to strengthen our faith and guide us in our resolve to carry out his will.
We pray for all the needs of the Church;
that you may bring about unity among men in the love of your Son.*

*Our Lady of Aberdeen, we pray for those who rule us,
we pray for our neighbours, our families and ourselves
that the peace of Christ may reign among us, always.*

Our Lady of Aberdeen, Our Lady of Good Success, pray for us.

And for our hymn today let's sing 'Amazing Grace' which isn't Scottish at all, but always feels it

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NG0vH4WYChQ>

And here's Jane McDonald singing a verse of it in a cave somewhere in the Hebrides

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2DWx7tR1KA>

We had another beautiful Mass yesterday lunchtime, and I think it is doing all our hearts, minds and souls good to be back together celebrating. Please don't be afraid to join us, there is plenty of room for us all to social distance. The weekday masses are particularly good for those who don't work. Once again, thanks to the stewards, cleaners, sacristans and servers and readers who make opening up possible.

In other news, Tobias, the Presbytery Cat, as you can see in the attached pic is very insistent that I wear a mask when out and about, especially when getting the train to Preston Today, although he's never too keen on me practising the ukulele...

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.