

Friday June 12<sup>th</sup>, Friday of Week Ten in Ordinary Time Year 2

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 trust we are all praying for each other's needs at this very strange time.

If you are feeling down during this time of lockdown, we can perhaps align ourselves with Elijah in this morning's first reading from I Kings 19:9, 11-16. In spite of all his work, Elijah finds that many of the people of Israel continue to desert the Lord and he is very despondent. He travels for forty days and nights and reaches Mount Horeb or Sinai to find the Lord. God was not found in the expected elements - wind, earthquake or Fire, but in the still voice - the 'whispering sound'. The Lord lifts Elijah's depression and assures him that he has not deserted his Chosen People. I know people have been telling me that they have never prayed more than in this time of lockdown and silence, perhaps giving us the opportunity to find God in times and places we never knew.

As the Sermon on the Mount continues, in Matthew 5:27-32, Jesus reiterates his teaching on obeying the laws religion from our hearts. Mere ritual observance is not enough. '*You have heard it said... but I say to you.*' In Jesus we have the supreme example of following God's law, and we should strive to follow his teachings as best we can. The fact that we have not been able to regularly follow 'ritual observance,' that is, we have not been able to come together to celebrate Mass gives us cause to think about the many ways in which we can practice and demonstrate our faith, for ourselves and to others.

*The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;  
the statutes of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;  
the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;  
the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;  
the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.  
More to be desired are they than gold, even much pure gold;  
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.*

The other day I was talking about the hymn 'The Day Thou Gavest Lord Is Ended', and I mentioned the line '*The sun that bids us rest is waking our brethren 'neath the Western sky,*' and how it always makes me think of my Australian family waking up to morning prayer and breakfast as I'm saying my night prayer and dozing off. My sister read this and duly took up the conch, sending me some

beautiful prayers, which are based on Aboriginal prayers and blessings. Margaret, my sister, mailed, *'Many of the prayers invoking nature come through the aboriginal traditions, which is appropriate, as they have been around here for 600,000 years and are the oldest continuous civilization in history.'* The following is a prayer written for Pope Saint John Paul's visit to the Aboriginal community, no doubt the first ever. It's powerful stuff.

*Creator of all, you gave us the Dreaming.  
You have spoken to us through our beliefs.  
You then made you love clear to us in the person of Jesus.  
We thank you for you care.  
You own us. You are our hope.  
Make us strong as we face the problems of change.  
We ask you to help the people of Australia  
to listen to us and respect our culture.  
May the knowledge of you grow in all people,  
so that you can be at home is,  
and we can make a home for everyone in our land.  
Amen.*

And this is a particularly beautiful blessing, based on Aboriginal prayer:

*May our footsteps on these ancient lands,  
remind us of creation and connectedness, in our sear for truth.  
May the Gum Tree, from its roots to its branches,  
remind us to dig deep and reach high, in our action for justice.  
May the Eagle, who soars in the sky,  
remind us of the Power, in our call to love.  
May the expanse of the lands and seas, of the sky and stars,  
remind us of God's place in our faith and hope.  
May the Holy Three, Papa God, Lord Jesus, Creator Spirit,  
remind us of community.  
So with grace, mercy and peace, may we go in truth, justice, love and hope.*

Perhaps as you pray it, you could look upon God's creation in the two attached photos which my sister sent, of the sunrise from their house in Clarendon yesterday morning, as she explained, *'looking over Mount Buninyong (which means 'kneecap' in the local Wathaurung language); being the middle of winter it's very frosty and very un-Australian.'* Thanks to my sister for the prayers and the pictures!

With regards to opening the Church, the risk-assessment has taken place, and been forwarded to the Diocese, and there are couple more things to do, and we should receive permission to open on Sundays (from the 21<sup>st</sup>) between 1-4pm for private prayer. I'll write more details about this nearer the

time. If we want to open up any other day, sometime midweek, perhaps, I am going to need your suggestions as to WHEN is a good time, but we also need stewards, who are prepared to sit in the porch for an hour on a rota, making sure people have sanitised their hands and observing social distancing. It's all positive, but your suggestions and support are needed if we are to move forward. Once again, cheers to Warren for his health and safety work in the parish.

Further Good News. As I announced yesterday, we have been given a charitable grant of £3,500 for food for vulnerable families in our school to match the money raised from the 26,000 steps. I received a message yesterday afternoon, that the figure has been upped to £4000. Such a great blessing.

And even further Good News. A dear Parishioner, who wishes to remain anonymous, is donating the whole cost of the statue of St. Bernadette for the Children's Memorial garden in School, £630, in memory of Pat and Karen Gregory. Amazing. So many thanks and blessings. There is one condition – I have to wear a Clerical Shirt all next week. So if you see me out and about you might not recognise me. But seriously, what a wonderful thing to do. Many, many thanks!

Cadbury's Crème Eggs are still available in the porch, in return for a picture of Tobias, which will be judged by him. I've been asked to keep this running for another week, so the result will be announced next Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> June! If you are passing the Church check out the pictures already there! Mass for the Feast of the Holy Trinity is available all week at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6QctJirdk4&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, though hopefully not for long. 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.