

Monday April 13th, Monday in Easter Week.

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 hope everyone is praying together for our all our intentions in this time of need.

And a Happy Easter Day to you all. Yes, Easter Day. This week we are in the Octave of Easter which essentially means that we celebrate Easter Sunday for eight days. But it's not over – we actually have fifty days of glorious Eastertide to celebrate the resurrection taking us right up to Pentecost, the fiftieth day, when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. Let's make today's hymn a jolly 'Alleluia, Give Thanks To the Risen Lord, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U1MuOCHon4>

Throughout this week the Gospel readings are all the various resurrection stories from the different Gospels. Today we see the appearance to Mary and the other women as they run to tell the disciples about the empty tomb, as recorded in Matthew (Mtt. 28:8-15), followed by the attempts by the Chief Priests to cover up the events. Our first reading today is from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:14, 22-33) which takes us to Pentecost morning, with the beginning of St. Peter's first great sermon to the People of Jerusalem. His message is a new message, that Christ, who was crucified, has risen, '*God raised this man Jesus to life and all of us are witness to that.*' Today we have to be those witnesses, and in our present situation, our actions, our prayers, and our caring for those more in need is perhaps the best witness to our beliefs.

My mate Eddy is a Parish Priest in Lincoln (you may remember that a couple of years ago I went down to preach at his twenty-fifth anniversary). This weekend on his message to his parishioners he included a blessing of food for Easter. Eddy is of Polish extract and in many Eastern European countries it was a tradition to have a basket of food blessed on Holy Saturday or Easter Sunday, a practice dating to the 15th century or earlier, and one which is still maintained by most families in Poland (and to some extent in other countries) on Holy Saturday. When Eddy was in Leicester he found that many people were coming to his door throughout Easter weekend asking him to bless food, so the following year he asked everyone to come to the Church on Holy Saturday at noon, and he would do one big blessing. He was amazed when 700 people turned up (sadly he never thought to take a collection!). The food items in the Easter basket, as well as at the Easter Sunday breakfast when the blessed food is eaten, have special significance. Bacon is a symbol of the abundance of God's mercy.

Bread represents the staff of life given by God. Coloured eggs, as well as uncoloured hard-cooked eggs, indicate hope, new life, and Christ rising from his tomb. Sausage links are symbolic of the chains of death that were broken when Jesus rose from the dead, as well as of God's generosity. Salt is present to add zest to life and preserve us from corruption and sweets suggest the promise of eternal life or good things to come. This is an extract from the blessing:

Let us pray:

We praise you Lord Jesus Christ who appeared to your disciples after your Resurrection in the breaking of the bread.

Remain with us O Lord when we eat these gifts. May we who gather at the Lord's table continue to celebrate the joy of his Resurrection and be admitted finally to his heavenly banquet. Who lives and reigns forever and ever.

The disciples recognised the Lord, Alleluia!

In the breaking of bread, Alleluia.

Let us pray:

God, the source of Life fill our hearts with paschal joy and as you gave us food on earth grant us in your mercy the new, everlasting life given us by Jesus Christ in his death and Resurrection. Who lives and reigns forever and ever.

Amen.

A lovely prayer to remind us of God's providence. Perhaps we should all make this one of Easter traditions.

I'm sure lots of you are taking advantage of the allowance to exercise once a day. Certainly it's been lovely to bump into lots of Parishioners on the front as they take their exercise walk (not bump into literally – obviously six feet apart), and it's nice to have a chit chat and catch up, and seeing the different ways we are all coping at this time. Jigsaws appear to be rising in popularity, and several people said they were using the time to do lots of reading. With regards to this it has been suggested we have a book exchange in the porch, so the bookshelf that is usually in the Parish Hall will be taken up to the church porch, and if you are passing on your healthy exercise walk, you might like to pick a book up or drop an old paperback off there. Please follow all the rules for social distancing if you do so.

On a sad note, I would ask you all to pray the *Eternal rest* for parishioner Ken Booth who sadly died yesterday morning. *Resquiescat in pace*. Please pray for Pauline and all Ken's family at this difficult time.

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. 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; 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.