

Wednesday May 13<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Eastertide

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. Although I'm a bit confused as to what the advice from the Government is. If forty people can wander round a garden centre couldn't forty people stand still in Church whilst I celebrate Mass? Anyway...

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

Once again the Scripture took on a whole new meaning for me as I celebrated Mass this morning. The response to the psalm today is *'I rejoiced when I heard them say "Let us go to God's house"'*. And how we will all rejoice when we can shout those words together and go to God's house that is St. Bernadette's to be together again. Let's look forward to that day and pray we will hear those words soon.

In the first reading this morning, Acts 15:1-6, we see an important moment in Church history. Some Jews tried to cause trouble by suggesting that in order to become a Christian one had first to become a Jew, and be circumcised. So the apostles decided to go back to Jerusalem for the first Council of the Church. Word preceded them about the huge numbers of pagans who had been converted by them. The subsequent discussion became the first 'Council of Jerusalem' with the Church leaders getting together to discuss Church rules and teachings.

In the Gospel, John 15-18, Jesus refers to himself as 'The True Vine'. Having spoken of himself as the Bread of Life, he now uses a new analogy to remind us that as members of his body, we have to produce good works. The Father is the Vinedresser, tending to all our needs and helping us to be the best possible people we can be, and *'it is to the glory of the Father though you should bear much fruit and then you will be my disciples'*.

*Dear Lord, I pray today to ask for help.*

*Help me to have the actions, words, and wisdom necessary to bear good fruit.*

*May the things I think, the things I say, and the deeds I do*

*show other people the love of Christ.*

*Help me to be a force for good, and an influence on others. Amen*

Going back to the first reading, the Council of Jerusalem was the first of many Church Councils throughout history, all of which have come to define particular teachings of the Church. The Council

of Nicaea in 325AD gave us the Nicæan Creed, the first longer Creed that we say at Mass on Sundays. The First Council of Ephesus in 431AD formerly decreed that Mary was the Mother of God – ratifying what the Church had believed since its beginning. It was only in 1123AD that the Lateran Council insisted on Priestly celibacy. The First Vatican Council in 1870 decreed the infallibility of the Pope, when speaking ‘ex cathedra’ (‘from his chair’) regarding faith and morals. Technically this was the longest ever Church Council as it didn’t officially end until 1960. The Franco-Prussian War broke out so the Council was suspended, and had to be officially ended before Vatican II could begin. Lastly we had the Second Vatican Council, from 1962-1965, which laid down that ‘normally the epistle and gospel from the Mass of the day shall be read in the vernacular’, and thus we have Mass in English. All in all there have been over twenty Church Councils, all have which have shaped and defined our faith, inspired by the Holy Spirit, following the teachings of Christ, and seeking the will of the Father. Although the Coronavirus pandemic will not be a reason for Vatican III, nevertheless the experience we are going through at the moment will in due course need to be reflected on, prayed about, and discussed with others, at local, deanery, diocesan, national, and perhaps universal levels. We pray for guidance and wisdom for all those who lead the Church at various levels, may they always be open to the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

And that’s today’s Church history lesson! Let’s make today’s hymn ‘The Church’s One Foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord.’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saUmPh52Nk0>

Yesterday evening I had one of my chaps at the door for a food bag. He’s one I’ve known for some time but has been more regular during this time of lockdown. As I left the food at the door for him to pick up he said, ‘*You know, I couldn’t survive without this. So when I go out on a Thursday night to clap the N.H.S. I always think of you, too.*’ And ‘you’ isn’t just me, it’s everyone at St. Bernadette’s who drops food off for me, gives me vouchers and food bank money, and who prays for those in need. I just thought it was such a beautiful thing for him to say.

I attach a pic of Jenny Morris with Colin at their door, as they were celebrating her birthday yesterday; passing on some presents people had left for her. Continued congratulations – and no she doesn’t look her age! She asked me to pass on her thanks for all the prayers and good wishes.

Finally, in your prayers, please pray for the repose of the soul of Susan Mary Gorton, whose funeral service I will celebrate at Carleton this afternoon at 4pm. I anointed Susan in the Hospice, and thus she died fortified by all the rites of Holy Mother Church. *May she rest in the peace of Christ.* And please pray for her bereaved mother, Mary, who many of you will know from 10am Mass on Sunday.

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.