

Thursday May 14<sup>th</sup>, The Feast of St. Matthias

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.

Today is the Feast of the Apostles St. Matthias. He is first introduced to us in today's first reading, Acts 1:15-17. 20-26. Peter takes the lead in deciding on a replacement for Judas to bring the apostolic group back up to twelve. Such a person had to know Jesus from the beginning of his public ministry and have seen him after his resurrection. After much prayer among the community the lot falls to Matthias. In the Gospel, John 15:9-17, Jesus is giving special encouragement to his faithful followers. The primary commandment is to love one another. In that way they will remain in both his and the Father's love. He then tells them that they are not servants but friends - friends for whom he would lay down his life. They were chosen by him to go out and continue his work. The word 'Apostle' means 'messenger' and today – and on any feast of any Apostle – we are reminded that it is us who have heard the Gospel who are now called to take up the mantle of the Apostles and pass on the message of Jesus' Good News to the world.

*Dear Jesus Christ,  
please help me to be your true Apostle on earth,  
and help me to effectively preach your gospel to other people.  
Do not let me be an obstacle to gospel evangelization,  
but help me to support it to spread further.  
I also pray for your ministers  
that spread your gospel throughout the world,  
please anoint and empower them unto success.  
Give them grace to irresistibly share your good news  
and lead people to your kingdom through them.  
Let every opposing force towards your gospel perish.  
Through the same Christ Our Lord.  
Amen.*

Little is known about the life of St. Matthias, though tradition tells us that he went on to spread the Gospel message in North Africa. While preaching the Gospel message, Matthias emphasized the importance of self-control. In order to experience the peace and joy that God intends, Matthias said,

people must subordinate their physical desires to their spiritual desires. The physical body is only temporary and subject to many temptations to sin and illnesses, while the spiritual soul is permanent and able to discipline the body for good purposes. Matthias preached that the Holy Spirit will empower people to exercise self-control over their unhealthy physical desires so they can experience good health in both body and soul. For this reason St Matthias is Patron Saint for anyone suffering from an addiction, and those who care for them. So for our hymn today let us sing 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind' (one of my favourite hymns) and ask the Lord to 'breath through the heat of our desires coolness and balm,' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faNij71hh7o>

One of the most difficult things for the bereaved with regards to deaths of their loved ones from the coronavirus has been the fact they were not allowed to be with their loved ones in person as they passed away. One sweet lady whose husband died last week was in this position and was given a poem she said so comforted her, and I pass it on to you.

*As the sun goes down  
and the night sky gains its brightest star  
Please smile, knowing I will never be too far.  
I know how you wished to be by my side,  
but love has no barriers,  
it's tucked deep inside.  
I was comforted and cared for  
by those in blue,  
so don't dwell on the short time  
when it couldn't be you.  
Instead, remember the memories we made,  
as it's important to me that these never fade.  
I know you were there  
checking up on the phone.  
So know they were holding my hand.  
I was not alone.*

Let's pray for all the bereaved at this time, and let's not forget to clap for 'those in blue' tonight at eight.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of our dear friend Alan Bird, whose funeral service I will be celebrating at Fleetwood Cemetery at 11:30am this morning. *May he rest in the peace and love of Christ.* Please keep Christine and all Alan's family in your special prayers at this time.

It has been suggested to me that after lockdown we should have a service for all our animals and pets as they have been such a comfort to us in this time. I think that's a great idea, and Mrs. Satterthwaite has said she is happy for us to use the school playing field and have a lovely blessing. It's true that our pets are always happy to give us a hug in our darkest times – as Tobias is always willing to demonstrate, as you can see in the attached picture...

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.