

Tuesday July 14<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday in the Fifteenth Week 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.

Well, after yesterday's early start, all went well. My car was picked up and dropped off in the evening, fully serviced and ready to go. The funeral at Lytham was small, but lovely, and the best we can do given the present circumstances. I see on the news that masks are going to become compulsory in shops, and I wouldn't be surprised if this becomes the case for Churches as well, so it might be an idea to stock up on one or two, just in case. I've discovered that breathable, washable, cyclist snoods work best for me, as they tend not to steam up my glasses. I bought a whole bunch of them on the internet, and they are very cheap. And very colourful too. I may need to buy a set in liturgical colours if they decide it's compulsory for the priest to wear them as well. Yesterday some more Church guidelines for singing came in. A soloist is fine, preferably behind a Perspex sheet (seriously) but not a choir or congregation, though smaller groups and bubbles can sing at outside services. This afternoon I have the first of my outdoor school masses at Holy Family, and we had been wondering about singing, so I'm thinking that is a yes. The weather is looking a bit dodgy, so wish me luck for today, and also for Thursday afternoon, when we have our outdoor Mass here at SB's. Today at noon in Church we have our SVP led Mass, and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone again.

The book of Isaiah in the Old Testament, is the biggest of all books, really three books put together. It includes prophecies, poetry, beautiful prose, but also quite a lot of history, and that's what we are presented with today in Isaiah 7:1-9. About ten years before its destruction, Israel (the Northern country), also called Ephraim, was allied to Syria. They tried to get Judah (the Southern country) to join with them against the common enemy, Assyria. Ahaz was the king of Judah at this time and he did not want to join, but was very afraid. Isaiah told him that the other countries would soon be no more and that the kingdom of David would last provided that they believed in the Lord. He has some words which are appropriate for us all at any time:

*'Pay attention, keep calm, have no fear,*

*do not let your heart sink.*

*But if you do not stand by me,*

*you will not stand at all,'*

Definitely a call to 'keep the faith,' something we are all trying to do at the moment.

In today's Gospel, Matthew 11:20-24, we see that in spite of his miracles, the people did not listen to Jesus. '*Alas for you!*' he calls to the towns. If you say that in a very angry voice it comes out very bitter, but if you say it in a sorrowful, rueful voice, I think you get a better idea of how Jesus is feeling. As a line from the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus says, 'These people will not believe even if a man should rise from the dead.' Let's pray for greater and increased belief in Our Lord and his teachings, both for ourselves and the world. And echoing Isaiah above, let us keep calm and have no fear:

*Lord God, loving Creator,  
You fashioned us from clay,  
And breathed life into us.  
We are made and loved by you.  
Heavenly Father,  
Your Spirit fills us with faith and hope  
And lights the path to fullness of life.  
Hear us, as we cry out to you, uncertain and afraid.  
In your mercy, Lord,  
Grant us the strength to rebuild  
When all seems lost.  
And the courage to reach out  
To those in pain.  
Though Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

There is a lovely Saint for today, who really touches a lot of where we are in our lives in these strange times today, and he is a priest called St. Camillus of Lellis. He was born at Bocchianico, in Italy in 1515. He fought for the Venetians against the Turks, was addicted to gambling, and by 1574 ended up penniless in Naples. But God works in very mysterious ways. He became a Capuchin novice, but was unable to be professed because of a diseased leg he contracted while fighting the Turks. He devoted himself to caring for the sick, and became director of St. Giacomo Hospital in Rome. He received permission from his confessor, St. Philip Neri, (who you will remember lived down the road from the English College in Rome) to be ordained and decided, to found his own congregation, the Ministers of the Sick (the Camellians), dedicated to the care of the sick. They ministered to the sick of Holy Ghost Hospital in Rome (just next to the Vatican – I did some sick visiting there as a student), and selflessly attended the plague-stricken aboard ships in Rome's harbour and in Rome. Just think of our NHS workers selflessly doing the same thing five centuries later! Gravely ill for many years, Camillus died in Rome on July 14 1614. He was canonized in 1746, and declared patron of the sick, with St. John of God, by Pope Leo XIII, and patron of nurses and nursing groups by Pope Pius XI.

This is the beautiful, official Prayer of St. Camillus for the Sick, and those who care for them. We know there are many sick who need our prayers at this time, and though we are no longer ‘clapping for the NHS’ on Thursdays, let us keep our medics and key workers and teachers at the forefront of our grateful prayers, also.

*Glorious St Camillus, turn your merciful eyes upon those who suffer  
and those who care for them.*

*Grant to the sick Christian resignation and trust in the goodness and power of God.*

*Make those who take care of the sick be generous and lovingly dedicated.*

*Help me to understand the mystery of suffering as a means of redemption  
and the way to God.*

*May your protection comfort the sick and their families  
and encourage them to live together in love.*

*Bless those who dedicate themselves to the infirm.*

*And may the good God grant peace and hope to all.*

*Give us, Lord, the strength and courage to overcome moments  
of desperation and exhaustion.*

*Furthermore, I ask You, Lord: Help doctors and nurses take care of the sick  
with the same dedication and love that St Camillus had.*

*Amen.*

In other news, the Morris family have been on a mini pilgrimage, and on Sunday afternoon tottered off to the Ladyewell at Furnyhalgh, and very beautiful it looks, as you can see in the attached pics.

As I’ve been writing this letter the skies seem to have got progressively darker. I hope there is a Plan B for this afternoon’s mass. Have a great day yourselves, and I’ll let you know how the Mass goes tomorrow.

Saturday night’s Mass is on the YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rgz-obCrZlc&feature=youtu.be> beginning with the hymn ‘Dear Lord and Father Of Mankind’. I’m beginning Mass with a hymn to get us into an atmosphere of prayer, and am happy to take requests!

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.