

Wednesday April 15th, Wednesday 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 once again a Happy Easter Day as we celebrate Wednesday in the Octave of Easter. We are continuing our resurrection stories, and today remain on Easter Sunday afternoon. The Gospel reading is the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) and it is an easy gospel to imagine ourselves into, not least because one of the disciples remains anonymous and so we can put ourselves in their place. I am sure we are familiar with the story; Jesus joins them as they are walking away from Jerusalem – walking away from the place they had come to know and love Jesus, where they had been given hopes and dreams, which had all now been dashed. As with Mary Magdalene, the two disciples don't recognise Jesus, their faces downcast. Jesus listens to them as they pour out their hearts sharing their disappointment over how things seem to have ended, he then explains the scriptures to them, and finally they sit down for a meal and it is at the breaking of bread that the two disciples recognise that it is Jesus who has been with them on their journey. We're told that Emmaus was seven miles from Jerusalem – say a two hour walk? Imagine having Jesus himself explain the Scriptures to you! How blessed those two people were.

I am sure that you are all missing actually being able to receive Holy Communion very much and I feel very conscious when I celebrate Mass each morning and receive Holy Communion that I am doing it on behalf of the entire parish. However we still have the Scriptures available to us. I think it's a truism to say that Catholics are notoriously bad at reading and praying the Scriptures, and maybe this lockdown is an opportunity to renew our prayerful reading of the Bible, that our hearts may truly burn within us as we read and hear the Word of God. If you don't have a bible in your house, why not try and get one, or there are many free downloads of the bible for e-readers. Let us enjoy the jewel that is the living Word of God.

Living God, you walk alongside us and speak to us throughout the Scriptures.

*Your Son, Jesus Christ, listens to our hopes and fears
and shows us how to live for one another.*

*Send us the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds
so that we may be your witnesses throughout the world.*

Amen.

Talking of the Scriptures, there are many different translations of the Bible, some of which are more accurate, some of which are more poetic, and it may take time to find one we prefer. From the Old King James version with its ‘thees’ and ‘thous’ to the very modern Good News Bible. In church we use The Jerusalem Bible, which is a good translation, although sometimes I feel it lacks poetry and can be a bit clumsy. I prefer Jesus to refer to the disciples as ‘fishers of men’ rather than telling them ‘from now on you will catch people.’ And in the opening of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5) for the Beatitudes I think ‘Blessed are...’ rather than ‘Happy are...’ is much more appropriate, as the word ‘Blessed’ implies a much deeper, more spiritual God-derived happiness. There are superficial differences in translations as well which may jar on our ears. For example, from today’s Gospel, I’ve always known Emmaus to be ‘seven miles from Jerusalem,’ so ‘eleven kilometres’ in the Good News Bible just doesn’t sound right to me, nor does ‘three-score furlongs’ which an old Bible on my shelf puts it. The literal translation is ‘sixty stadia’ (a stadion being about six hundred feet, the length of a Greek stadium race). Either way, the important thing is to find a Bible we like and read it. As the old saying goes *‘Bibles that are falling apart are usually read by people that aren’t.’*

Some parishioners have been telling me about how priests in other parts of the world are coping with their empty Churches. Apparently one priest in the Philippines asked his parishioners to send in photos of their faces, which he then printed out and stuck to the pews where they normally sit (sounds like a job for Eileen). Another priest filled his pews with Teddy Bears. The mind boggles as to why he had so many Teddy Bears he could fill a Church, but still, I’ve made an effort as you can see from the attached photo. Actually, the photo needs some explanation. From left to right, the first two characters, the monk and the rocker, Frankie and Benny, are actually signing puppets – the hands have individual fingers so I can use British Sign Language with them when signing for children. The middle character, with the bucket on his head is a puppet of Ned Kelly, an Australian outlaw, sent to me as a Christmas present from my sister who lives in Australia. The little dog is a ‘Puppy to Person’ history dog from Ground Zero in New York, encouraging people to tell the story of 9/11 to future generations. And the actual Teddy Bear was my first ever bear, made for me by my Gran when I was two years old. He’ll be fifty next year. And you think you’re going stir-crazy in lockdown...

Finally, some sad news, that her daughters have allowed me to pass on to you, our dear parishioner and friend Margaret Sintes died yesterday from complications from the stroke she suffered before Christmas. I visited her on Good Friday where she was staying with her daughter who called me, and was able to give her the Sacrament of the Sick and the final Apostolic Pardon, during which she made the sign of the Cross. She died fortified by all the Rites of Holy Mother Church. *Eternal rest grant unto her O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen. May her souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.* Margaret

had left detailed instructions for her Requiem Mass, and until we can celebrate that Mass in Church let us sing for her the final hymn she requested 'Guide Me, O Thy Great Redeemer'. In the letter she left me detailing her Requiem she wrote 'When I worked in Wales I went to an Eisteddfod, at the end of which the audience of 1000 ordinary Welsh people stood up and sang. It was the most inspiring sound I have ever heard.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wT4n1hGjDDg> God bless her.

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.