

Thursday April 16<sup>th</sup>, Thursday 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 Thursday in the Octave of Easter. Each morning of this week the preface to the Eucharistic Prayer reminds us that it is still 'Easter Sunday';

*It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,  
at all times to acclaim you, O Lord,  
but **on this day** above all  
to laud you yet more gloriously,  
when Christ our Passover has been sacrificed.  
By dying he has destroyed our death,  
by rising he has restored our life.*

Today's Gospel, Luke 24:24:35-48, tells us what happened when the two disciples from Emmaus returned to Jerusalem. Jesus appears to them and the Apostles, and to prove he is no ghost, to prove the truth of bodily resurrection, he eats a piece of grilled fish (I love that St. Luke gives us the detail that it was grilled!). A lot of Jesus' resurrection appearances take place in the context of a meal, and the breaking of bread, perhaps foretelling that it is in the context of receiving the food that is Jesus himself at Mass that we most often come into contact with the divine. As we reflect on this, our inability to gather together for the Eucharist becomes all the more poignant. I am having to come to a new understanding of what it means to celebrate Mass 'with and for' our parish. I will be interested too in hearing and learning something of your experiences of making a 'spiritual Communion'. Even on a human level I am sure many of us felt the absence of being able to gather with family and friends on Easter Sunday and on other days too to share food and drink together, not least after the many funeral services I am celebrating at the moment. As we reflect on these experiences, which can undoubtedly be troubling at times, we can allow the Lord to speak to us just as he did to his disciples, his first words always being '*Peace be with you!*'

And today we should celebrate as April 16<sup>th</sup> is the Feast of our very own St. Bernadette. So today let's make our hymn, of course the Lourdes Hymn, 'Immaculate Mary'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2D3JbxV0I7k>

This year more than ever we should especially heartily sing the verse *'O Mary, our Mother, reign o'er us once more. Be England thy dowry as in days of yore'* as this has been the year of England's rededication to Mary. This Rededication on March 29th was a both a personal promise of the people of our country, and a renewal of the entrustment vows made by King Richard II in 1381. The first dedication was made by King Richard II in Westminster Abbey as he sought the protection of Our Lady in the face of great political turmoil. At this point, England received the title 'Mary's Dowry'; meaning that England was 'set aside' as a gift, a dowry, for Our Lady under her guidance and protection. It's one of the reasons we are one of the few countries in the world always to conclude our Prayers of Intercession at Mass with the 'Hail Mary, or another Marian prayer. As King Richard II once gave England as a gift to Our Lady, so we are invited to give ourselves, as the people of this country, to Mary. To help us on our way, we could pray 'The Angelus Promise', an extended version of 'The Angelic Salutation' which takes us deeper into the mystery of the Annunciation, and helps us say 'Yes' to God, as our Blessed Mother did so perfectly..

*R: The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary*

*V: And she conceived by the Holy Spirit*

*As God once chose Mary to become the Mother of His Son through the message of an angel, so He chooses me this day, and invites me through the ministry of the Church or the example of another, to seek and do His Will at this moment in my life.*

*Hail Mary full of Grace...*

*R: Behold the handmaid of the Lord*

*V: Be it be done unto me according to thy Word*

*Mary's response to her invitation, "let it be done to me according to your Word", opened her heart to God's grace and all things became possible. Let my "yes" today take away fear, as I embrace God's Will, and like Mary "ponder these things in my heart".*

*Hail Mary full of Grace...*

*R: And the Word became flesh (Bow or genuflect)*

*V: And dwelt among us*

*At a moment in history, Mary's faith-filled "yes" conceived Him, first in her heart, which then led to the birth of our Saviour.*

*Through accepting Him in my heart, enable me to recognise my role in bringing Christ to my sisters and brothers today.*

*Hail Mary full of Grace...*

*R: Pray for us most holy Mother of God*

*V: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ*

*Let us pray: O Holy Mother of God, pray for us, and assist us as we dedicate ourselves this*

*day. Your Yes at the Annunciation brought our Saviour Jesus into the world, and you invite us to contemplate the great mystery of the Incarnation, sharing your joy in announcing that “the Word was made flesh and lived among us.” May our yes, this day, open our hearts to serve our sisters and brothers in this your Dowry, that they too may share our joy in the Good News that God walks among us. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

And I know there are so many of you ‘serving our brothers and sisters in this, your Dowry’. Continued thanks for the collections, offerings, food and money for vouchers which is being dropped in. A lot of it is going to our school, and it is both needed and very much appreciated. People’s generosity at this time is amazing. Yesterday I was delivered three huge boxes of sweets from a lady whose business was closing and wanted to pass on some of her stock and heard that St. Bernadette’s distributes food. As I write this message someone has just popped a hundred pounds’ worth of Tesco vouchers through the letterbox. Incredible. Huge thanks and blessings to you all. And if you know someone who needs a little help at this time, just let me know.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Marianne Fahey whose funeral I celebrated at Carleton this morning at 9am, and also remember Katie Ray, for whom I celebrated a Birthday Remembrance Mass this morning in Church, she would have been just 23 years old. *Requiescat in pace.*

And congratulations to our Parishioner and Sacristan Gerry Reppe who today becomes President of the Garstang Catenian Circuit. Bravo Gerry!

Don’t forget to go out and clap for the NHS and all our key workers at 8pm tonight. Let us praise and be grateful for all our parishioners who are key workers at this time

In other news, a Parishioner has emailed me congratulating me on becoming the new manager of West Bromwich Albion. I was as surprised as he was at the attached photo...!

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.