

Friday April 17th, Friday 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.

Once again, one of the prayers of today's mass has a new significance in our present situation:

*Keep safe, O Lord, we pray,
those whom you have saved by your kindness
that, redeemed by the Passion of you Son,
they may rejoice in his Resurrection,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.*

Let us pray that we all do everything we can to 'keep safe' in these times.

Today's resurrection Gospel, taken from St. John, John 21:1-31, records Jesus appearing to the disciples by the Lake of Galilee after they had spent a night fishing, but catching nothing. At first, as with many of the resurrection appearances, they don't recognize Jesus until he has spoken to them, giving them instructions to cast out their nets starboard, hauling in a huge amount of fish. At this Peter leaps out of the boat into the water to go and greet the Lord, and they have another meal with him, in friendly silence. We shouldn't be surprised that the disciples went fishing. After the crucifixion all their hopes and dreams were dashed, and they must have thought about returning to the life they knew before they met Jesus. But their efforts are futile, not surprisingly as disappointment and despondency are rarely productive. Only with the advice and presence of the Lord do they succeed. It's another reminder to invite the Lord especially into our lives at this time, to keep our spirits up as a community, and not fall into despair, especially as the present situation looks to continue for a while. Even in lockdown our prayers and the presence of Christ can still work miracles. The wonderful things that so many people are doing, the incredible generosity of spirit of many, and the overwhelming hard work of our key workers, and the great support being shown to them, is proof of this.

Just as with the detail of the grilled fish in yesterday's Gospel, so today we are given the precise number of fish that were caught - one hundred and fifty-three. Scholars have long debated the meaning of this number, coming up with all sorts of bizarre theories involving numerology and

integers and complicated stuff, but the great theologian St. Jerome, who was the first person to translate the Bible into Latin, recorded that an ancient Greek poet Oppian, who wrote a five volume treatise on the behaviour of animals, noted that there were one hundred and fifty-three species of fish. So with every type of fish being called to the breakfast of the Lord, so the Apostles, who are now to be 'fishers of men', should invite every single person to the breakfast of the Lord. No one is excluded. Let's pray that when we open the Church doors again we will invite all people to come to our Church, to celebrate the food that is the Bread of Life.

For today's hymn, let us follow the risen lord to the lake of Galilee, and share in his divine meal, as we sing 'Will You Come And Follow Me' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zk6IUaJ3sk>

I'm sure many of you watched the truly inspiring concert by Andrea Bocelli from Milan at the weekend. It really was a great message of hope. It's still available on YouTube and is a wonderful half hour <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=huTUOek4LgU&feature=youtu.be>

Once again it was heartening to go out yesterday evening, and clap and cheer for the NHS and all key workers. I sat and beeped my car horn, and, as you can see from the attached picture, the Presbytery has got in on the action as well. So many heartfelt thanks and blessings to them all.

In other news, Tobias, the Presbytery Cat, would like to remind his fellow creatures of their need to social distance. In the attached pic he demonstrates correct Feline Social Distancing which should be followed at all times.

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.