

Wednesday June 17th, Wednesday in the Eleventh 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.

And I trust we are all praying for each other's needs at this very strange time.

In our Old Testament history in our readings today we move to the second book of Kings (II K 2:1. 6-14) and the end of Elijah's ministry. His true successor is Elisha, who had followed him very closely. Now, when Elijah uses his cloak to divide the waters of the Jordan, he is the only one of the group who goes across with him. He sees the vision of Elijah being taken up to heaven in a whirlwind on a Chariot of Fire. He destroyed his own cloak, took that left behind by Elijah as the symbol of his power and uses it to recross the river to join the rest of the company of prophets.

You will probably recognise today's Gospel Reading, Matthew 6:1-6.16-18. It is the Gospel reading we also hear on Ash Wednesday every year with its call to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

I did a check on my calendar and it is 16 weeks since Ash Wednesday. How long ago does that seem now! At Mass we not only received the ashes on our foreheads but we would have shaken hands at the sign of peace and received Holy Communion under both kinds if we had wished to. At that time we had probably heard of Coronavirus but it was something that was happening in another part of the world and I don't think any of us could have imagined how much of an impact it would have on us.

It is worth looking back briefly over those 16 weeks. At first we began Lent as usual. We made our Lenten resolutions (I gave up snacks, but gave up giving up when lockdown started); we began making the Stations of the Cross in church on a Tuesday evening and Sunday afternoon, and our catechumen for reception into the Church took part in the Rite of Election at the Cathedral on the First Saturday afternoon of Lent. Things changed in the middle of Lent and our last Mass together in church was on Friday 20th March. For the remainder of Lent, for the Easter Triduum and the whole of the Easter Season, and for the weeks that have followed, we have been living through a new reality that probably none of us have experienced before. No wonder many of us are feeling disorientated, confused, and anxious about the future.

Hopefully we can now see some light at the end of the tunnel and we can begin to look forward to some resumption of our usual pattern of parish life, or rather a new pattern for our Parish life, as it is

not yet clear what the final destination, the 'new normal', will look like. We will definably be open for private prayer on Sunday from 1pm-4pm, when we will be able to make our prayers in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Please do call in.

To return to the Gospel Reading, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are not just for Lent but should be a constant part of our Christian lives. Yes, you have been on an extended Eucharistic fast (I recognise that this doesn't apply to me). Some people have told me that this experience has strengthened their prayer life, and greatened their desire for the Eucharist. And certainly you have all been most generous in your almsgiving, but no doubt there will be many calls on the generosity of those who will be spared the worst financial impact of the pandemic to help those who will not be so fortunate.

Lord, help me to pray.

Lord, help me to fast.

Lord, help me to give to those in need.

This year our Lent has been extended.

*May this time of Pandemic not weaken our resolve to serve and be with you,
but strengthen it, and increase our desire to be in your presence.*

May our Church doors be flung open for us to pray,

May our Eucharistic fast end, and we can celebrate Mass together again,

May our community seek to serve together all those in need.

And may Your will be done.

Though Christ our Lord. Amen.

Along with writing this message, every day now I do a little one minute video to be played in the school classrooms for the children in their 'bubbles.' It's been great fun making them, and a new way to reach out to our children when I can't physically be present. Yesterday even the gardeners got involved! It's just a little morning prayer for the children to start the day.

Good morning, Lord!

Today's a new day, a chance for a new start.

Yesterday is gone and with it any regrets, mistakes, or failures I may have experienced.

It's a good day to be glad and give thanks, and I do, Lord.

*Thank you for today, a new opportunity to love, give,
and be all that you want me to be.*

Though Christ Our Lord. Amen.

One of our dear Parishioners has been making face mask adjusters for the NHS and health care workers. As rules have now come in that we all must wear masks on public transport and enclosed spaces, she wondered if our parishioners might appreciate any? They stop the elastic rubbing behind

the ears. She has attached a picture of us, and how they are used, so you put the crochet band behind your head and attach the elastic ear loops around the buttons, thus keeping the elastic away from the ears. There are a bag of them in the porch – in an array of fetching colours - and you are most welcome to take them if you think it would help, and she is making some more for us. And many thanks! Incidentally, also in the porch, as well as the usual prayer sheets, newsletters and miraculous medals, are sealed bottles of Holy Water, and also Mass Cards and Intention envelopes. The Porch is open every day from 10am-4pm.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Constance Ellwood, whose funeral I will be celebrating in the cemetery of St. John's, Poulton at Noon today. *May she rest in the peace and love of Christ.* Connie moved into the Parish about three years ago, having lived and worked in St. John's for many years. She received Holy Communion at home and regular visits from the S.V.P., and would always attend the First Friday Mass and Anointing of the Sick, joining us for coffee afterwards in the sacristy. Her daughter wrote to me, *'Thank you so much for all you did to involve mum in your Parish, it made a real difference to her in these later years. Your parish embraced her and let her know that you were there for her.'* All credit to you, St. Bernadette's, and especial thanks to the S.V.P. for their care and concern for all our sick and housebound. At Connie's funeral we will be sing 'Immaculate Mary, our Hearts Are On Fire,' so let us make that our hymn today

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsC4yHD-Sy4>

Mass of Corpus Christi will be available all week at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JhSLoRg45I&feature=youtu.be>

The link for the Mass sheet is

<https://www.rpbooks.co.uk/uploads/www.rpbooks.co.uk/13BodyBloodChrist.pdf> .

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, though hopefully not for long. 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.

