

Friday July 17th, Friday 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, slowly emerging into our new normality post lockdown.

In today's first reading, the last extract from Isaiah 38:1-6, 21-22, we have the account of the last king before the exile, Hezekiah (who incidentally does *not* give his name to a large bottle of champagne). He is afraid and ill, but because of his personal faithfulness, he is healed through the prayer of Isaiah. He was given a supernatural sign of the sun's shadow moving backwards to help him believe. This story was to inspire the people and give them a sense of awe before their God, in whom they must trust when they are in exile in Babylon. Those who remain faithful will form the remnant after the exile.

And in the Gospel, Matthew 12:1-8, we have an example of how the Pharisees put the details of the law before the person. They made the laws of the Sabbath very strict indeed, and instead of it being a day of rest to honour God, it was a day filled with restrictions. Despite the fact that Sunday Obligation has been lifted for the time being, it's still a good day to make time for prayer and peace, as we reflect on the past week and look forward to the new. Each week over the last few months has brought so many different changes, and we wonder what each week holds for us now.

Thank You for this Sunday.

Lord, we come before you first and foremost with hearts of gratitude.

You have seen us through another week,

and we stand at the threshold of a fresh week, full of new beginnings.

Lord, help us start this bright embarking with You.

Stir in us a deep desire to come into further relationship with You.

Remind us that it is not solely by going to Sunday Mass

that we worship and come before You;

rather, it is through the daily communion with You through relationship and prayer.

Highlight to us how we may be obedient to Your call and heart.

Embrace us with Your love, oh Lord,

for we desperately desire to know You and to feel Your love around us.

Give us a hunger for Your Word and truth, oh Lord.

*Help us begin our week this day in preparation through contemplation
and connection with You.*

Through Your Son, Christ our Lord. Amen

So thinking about Sundays how about for today's hymn we all sing a nice bouncy 'This Is The day That The Lord Has Made.'? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRLxugEtqx8>

And for a Saint today with have Pope Saint Leo VI, a ninth century Roman, who is chiefly known for rebuilding St. Peter's Basilica, and rebuilding walls around the Vatican, and also around Rome to prevent invasions. He died in Rome on 17 July 855 and is buried in St. Peter's Basilica. There is an Urban Myth that he was succeeded by 'Pope Joan', a woman who fooled everyone into thinking she was a priest, but apparently it's a load of medieval nonsense. (He was actually succeeded by Benedict III)

*O God, who are rich in mercy
and who willed that Saint Leo IV should preside as Pope over your universal Church,
grant, we pray, that instructed by his teaching,
we may open our hearts to the saving grace of Christ,
the sole Redeemer of mankind.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.*

And today I am celebrating the twenty-sixth anniversary of my Ordination to the Priesthood. The Mass of Ordination took place at St. Mary's Cleator, at 3pm on a gloriously sunny Sunday afternoon, July 17th 1994, led by Bishop Brewer. It was quite the occasion. I processed in with the other priests, but then left them to sit with my family. After the Liturgy of the Word (with my sister dramatically proclaiming the call of Jeremiah) my Parish Priest, Fr. Tim Sullivan formally informed the Bishop that I had been found suitable for Ordination, after which I came forward and sat separately to listen to the Bishop's sermon. After this I lay on the floor, prostrating myself before the Lord as the Litany of the Saints was sung, after which the Bishop prayed and layed his hands on me, followed by all the priests (all fifty-seven of them). My mother then came up with the Vestments and vested me. I was then anointed with the oil of Chrism on my hands, and then welcomed into the priesthood by all the priests with a sign, a handshake or hug, of peace. I was then presented with a chalice and a pattern, the tools of my trade, brought up by my brother and sister in law, and then the Mass continued with me taking part in the Eucharistic prayer for the first time. As I said, quite the occasion, and a life changing day. And I couldn't be in a better parish to celebrate this anniversary. I attach a couple of pics.

*Holy Father,
who, by no merit of my own,
chose me for communion with the eternal priesthood of your Christ
and for the ministry of the Church,
grant that I may be an ardent, yet gentle preacher of the Gospel*

*and a faithful steward of your mysteries.
For the glory of you name, O Lord,
I joyfully celebrate the mystery of faith
to mark the anniversary of my priestly ordination,
so that I may be in truth
what I handle mystically in this sacrifice.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Terence Green, whose funeral I will be celebrating at Carleton later this morning. *May he rest in the peace and love of Christ.*

I was going to tell you all the news about the Diocesan Virtual Pilgrimage to Lourdes, but I'll leave it till tomorrow, as this message has already gone on far too long, and I'm heading off to the Crem now. Make it a good day, you never know what tomorrow holds.

Saturday night's Mass is on the YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rgz-obCrZJc&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.