

Thursday June 18th, Thursday 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 first reading we leave our Old Testament and jump to the book of Sirach 48:1-14 to hear the great canticle of praise for the prophet, Elijah. All his great works are summed up in this poem - the drought and how he ended it, the various miracles he performed, his speaking with the Lord at Horeb, and finally his disappearance in the great whirlwind. Elisha was filled with his spirit and continued his work. There is a lovely line in the poem, which reminds me of Jesus' words to 'doubting' Thomas after the resurrection. It's also a lovely affirmation of greeting friends and loved ones in the afterlife;

*'Happy shall they be who see you,
and those who have fallen asleep in love;
for we too will have life.'*

Let's remember all our loved ones who have 'fallen asleep in love,' and happily look forward to seeing them again.

*Grant, Lord, that I may one day walk before you
with my family and friends
in that land of the living where they now dwell;
and that I may do so, give me grace to walk with you now.
Make me now to know your voice and to follow you;
that so when I walk through the valley of death I may fear no evil,
knowing that you are with me.
Amen.*

Yesterday Jesus spoke of the way to say our prayers in a meaningful way. He now gives an example of genuine, authentic prayer, what we now call the 'pattern' of all prayer, the 'Our Father' Matthew 6:7-15. There are three 'You petitions': may your name be held holy, may your kingdom come, may your will be done. These are followed by three 'we-petitions': give us our daily bread, forgive us our debts, do not put us to the test but save us. As an addendum to the prayer, Jesus finishes by pointing out that our willingness to forgive others is the necessary condition for getting God's forgiveness.

*Dear Lord, I thank You for the power of forgiveness,
and I choose to forgive everyone who has hurt me.*

Help me set free and release them to You (Romans 12:19).

Help me bless those who have hurt me (Romans 12:14).

*Help me walk in righteousness, peace, and joy,
demonstrating Your life here on earth.*

*I choose to be kind and compassionate, forgiving others,
just as You forgave me (Ephesians 4:32).*

Though the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

And let today's him be 'God forgave my sin in Jesus' name,'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFV00VeKdlw>

Although at present I am not able to go into school and talk with the children in their 'bubbles', other than by my video messages, I am able to go into school at the end of the day and chat with the staff. I'm pleased to report that all is going well under the restrictions. The children have been adapting well to their new surroundings and situation, and it really has been happy faces all round. As you can see from the attached picture, the classrooms look very different! One of our teachers has been sent a lot of encouraging messages for the school, which have been very movingly appreciated by our staff, and I have permission to share some of them with you;

"School opening sounds very positive and obviously very good for the children, and parents too. It's nice to hear something good during all this - especially where the children are concerned."

"The unsung heroes are the caretaker and the cleaner. They must work so hard."

"Well done everyone involved in the school day. It can't be easy but you are obviously a good team. The parish is proud of you all."

"We think about you all a lot and we always hope you are well. The news locally is always a bit glum but the school keeps us going."

"Well done all staff you have done well. Father Peter has done his bit. He has sent in a short recorded message for each day, a prayer and a blessing. I bet they were top class."

"I would like to mention two governors who worked very closely with the head teacher – Alexis - in a Zoom meeting for a risk assessment. It was truly a whole team effort. It didn't happen overnight."

"You must all be ready for a break – thank you for everything you are doing in these times."

"What a team at St Bernadette's school. The children are blessed with the dedicated Staff and Governors. I always loved going to the Wednesday Mass. The children are so spiritually involved in the Mass and love singing and signing. It's all down to Father Peter and the wonderful staff. Well done to everyone at this difficult time. You are all Super Stars!"

"God Bless St Bernadette's staff – all of them – for what they do for us and our grandchildren."

"Parent and parishioner here: thank you for making my children feel welcome and happy."

We were nervous about sending them in but as soon as we saw them at hometime we knew we had made the right decision. And it's all down to the systems you have put in place and how hard you all work. You must have all been nervous too but you made it work and you put our children first. Thank you so much."

"Such a lovely group of people in our Parish. Many things are arranged and 'just happen' and we see the end results, but seldom do we know or understand what enormous efforts go into making them happen. So sincere heartfelt thanks to all of you who have made this possible to enable you to teach our children well."

"Well, what more can be said about our school, teachers, governors and all the staff who have gone from strength to strength. Including, of course, our charismatic parish priest Father Peter. You are ALL a credit to our parish. God bless all."

And God bless YOU all for those wonderful thoughts.

We have finally received the following from the diocese, *'Dear Father, The Property Office has informed me that the relevant self-declared checks have been made for the church St Bernadette, Blackpool, and are completed.. (Completed by Mr Warren Dale, 11/6/20) Accordingly, you are welcome to open this building for private prayer only, as per your intended opening schedule from 15th June 2020. With grateful thanks, Paul Embery V.G.'* So it's all systems go for Sunday, and huge thanks to Warren for paving the way. We'll give you more details tomorrow about what private prayer entails and the instructions for popping in, but just to let you know that the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed, and you are allowed to light candles.

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.