

Tuesday April 19th, Tuesday in the Sixth Week of Eastertide.

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.

Several times I've referred to the Acts of the Apostles as a Boy's Own Adventure Story, and today's first reading, Acts 16:22-34, exemplifies that description. Paul gets into trouble when he casts an evil spirit out of a fortune-teller and is arrested, beaten and imprisoned. An earthquake rocks the prison, and all the inmates chains are broken. The head Jailer is totally freaked out by all of this (not surprisingly, really) and asks Paul what to do. Paul preaches the Word to him, and the Jailer and all his household are converted, with them all going to the Jailer's house of a celebration. The magistrates were horrified to learn that they had flogged a Roman citizen. It's a great scene and worth reading in full. In the Gospel, John 16:5-11, Jesus continues to deepen our knowledge about the coming Holy Spirit, Jesus tells his disciples not to be sad because he is going. He will send the Advocate who will show the world about sin, about who was in the right, and about judgment.

Holy Spirit, we welcome You.

Holy Spirit, we know that You are the Counsellor of Truth,

our help in need, and the One who fills us with the Spirit of God.

Holy Spirit, we pray this very day to come into greater communion with You.

You so graciously work to intercede for us to the Father,

but also to comfort us with Your peace that goes beyond all understanding.

Holy Spirit, please come.

In these last couple of weeks leading up to Pentecost, let us all sing together 'Spirit of the Living God, Fall Afresh On me':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GK-O5nfl1Mo>

Today in England it is the memorial of St. Dunstan, who lived at the end of the first Millennium, and was Abbot of Glastonbury, until eventually becoming Archbishop of Canterbury. He was zealous in building Churches, promoting monastic life, and restoring ecclesiastical discipline. He was also an excellent artist and calligrapher. Dunstan became Patron Saint of English goldsmiths and silversmiths because he worked as a silversmith making church plate. He was buried in Canterbury Cathedral.

O God, source of all gifts,

who raised up the Bishop Saint Dunstan

*to be a true shepherd of the flock,
a restorer of monastic life
and a trusted counsellor of kings,
grant at his intercession, we pray,
an abundance of your Spirit to all Pastors,
that with wisdom and truth they may offer
worthy service to Christ and to his people.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever. Amen.*

If you haven't already signed the petition to safely open our Churches, please do so. I'm sure if we can go to Garden Centres (which I did on Sunday – to buy two large planters) and Tesco we could manage some socially distanced worship in Church, and Eileen is all ready with the Dettol and the Wipes to go around the Church afterwards (as they do in the Crematorium chapels). Just as our schools at the moment are working out how to follow Government directions (or mis-directions quite frankly) with regards to children coming back to school, surely we could think about how it could work in Church. As I said yesterday, we could easily have fifty-people socially distancing in our relatively small Church, and if eighteen people are allowed at a funeral in Carleton, why not something similar in our own Church? I do think Churches have been either badly treated or even just forgotten with regards to this and we need to make a stand – I don't recall any mention of them in the PM's speech last Sunday. Can I suggest petitioning our individual MPs to show our strength of feeling? I guess Westminster does not consider Churches to support the economy so therefore they are not that important at the present time. Anyone who has had to attend a funeral at this sad time will have strong feelings on the matter. Perhaps when the Pubs open, likely before Churches, we should think about having Mass in Weatherspoon's, or a restaurant, where it will apparently be more possible to socially-distance (although how a waiter can pour me a glass of Pinot-Grigio at six feet distance I'd like to see) than in a church. Please don't think I'm speaking against these places opening (I want a pizza at Pulci's as much as anyone) and we must all keep ourselves as safe as possible, but if other places can open, with whatever precautions, surely we should be able to. Also, as I know some of you have, please put the link on your facebook pages or whatever, or email it to your contacts

<https://citizengo.org/en-gb/rf/179408-open-our-churches-and-restore-worship>

Rant over. For now.

As we are seeking to open our Churches I attach a picture of the Church Remembrance carpet of poppies. One of our Parishioners is currently knitting some blue and white poppies to add to the other

poppies in remembrance of the NHS workers who have died looking after us, and defending us against all illnesses, during the current pandemic.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Margaret Docherty, mother of Father Michael Docherty and his brother Craig. Margaret died after a prolonged illness, fortified by the Rites of Holy Mother Church. *May she rest in the peace of Christ.* I had the pleasure of meeting Margaret on a Pilgrimage to Rome, and she worked in various roles in the Diocese, not least as Chair of the Union of Catholic Mothers. She'll be greatly missed.

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.