

Wednesday April 22nd Wednesday of Second Week of Easter

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.

It's another beautiful Gospel this morning (on another beautiful morning!), our final passage from the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus, the Pharisee who came to him at night. In this final passage (John 3:16-21) we really see some of the most important tents of our Christian faith, really a summing up of the whole of the Bible:

*Jesus said to Nicodemus
'God loved the world so much
that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost
but may have eternal life.
For God sent his Son into the world
not to condemn the world,
but that so through him the world might be saved'*

We should really hold on to that phrase at the moment, as whatever we are going through, Jesus is there to bring us hope and joy, even in our darkest moments. At times we may feel 'lost' but the promise of an eternal life gives us 'hope'

*Heavenly father, I am your humble servant,
I come before you today in need of hope.
There are times when I feel helpless,
There are times when I feel weak.
I pray for hope.
I need hope for a better future.
I need hope for a better life.
I need hope for love and kindness.
Some say that the sky is at it's darkest just before the light.
I pray that this is true, for all seems dark.
I need your light, Lord, in every way.
I pray to be filled with your light from
head to toe, to bask in your glory.*

*To know that all is right in the world,
as you have planned, and as you want it to be.
Help me to walk in your light,
and live my life in faith and glory.
In your name I pray, Amen.*

So let's make today's hymn 'Lord Of All Hopefulness'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-D_aT8CXyc

The other day I was talking about St. Isidore, Patron Saint of the Internet, and a few people mailed to ask who is the Patron Saint to help us during the current Pandemic. There are officially two Saints to be invoked during such a crisis. The first is St. Sebastian. In the third century St. Sebastian infiltrated the Roman Army, who at the time were persecuting Christians, to try and help other Christians and also other Christian Soldiers, many of whom he brought into the Church. When his actions were discovered the Emperor Diocletian ordered him to be executed, and tied to a post he was hailed with arrows and left for dead. However a Christian woman, who became St. Irene of Rome found him breathing, and miraculously nursed him back to health. Particularly during the Middle Ages, but as early as the seventh century in Rome, St Sebastian became a symbol for suffering humanity during recurring plagues, and his miraculous recovery gave those afflicted hope and consolation. Abbeys, churches and basilicas were founded in his name; and after the recent outbreak of coronavirus, Sebastian was one of the first saints we were encouraged to seek the intercession of.

The other Saint we call upon for intercession at this time is St. Roch, who was born in France in the fourteenth century, with a red birthmark in the shape of a cross upon his chest. After giving his money to the poor after his parents died, St. Roch travelled to plague infested Italy, and his birthmark cross cured people everywhere he went. Not wanting to seek celebrity he returned to France, but was mistaken for a spy and died in prison, but then given a huge funeral when he was recognised by his cross. Perhaps today we could all say the ancient prayer seeking the intercession of St. Roch:

*O Blessed St Roch, Patron of the sick,
Have pity on those who lie upon a bed of suffering.
Your power was so great when you were in this world,
That by the sign of the Cross, many were healed of their diseases.
Now that you are in heaven, your power is not less.
Offer, then, to God our sighs and tears.
And obtain for us that health we seek
Through Christ Our Lord
Amen.*

Truly a prayer for our times.

It's lovely to hear about the many kindnesses that are taking place during this time. A family in the Parish who live near Carleton Cemetery have mailed to say that if anyone would like a grave visited at this time, and a rainbow placed on the stone, if you send me the details of the name of the deceased and whereabouts in the cemetery they are, they would be honoured to visit. How thoughtful is that? A beautiful gesture, and well done for such a kind action.

Continued thanks for those offering to sponsor my mini step marathon of 26,000 steps on Sunday. I've even got Hollowells Undertakers involved, as sadly, I'm seeing far too much of them in these times.

In other news, Tobias has asked me to remind his feline friends that if you are unable to sit on the best seat in the house, the lap of the humans you own, you should at least make the seat you sit on as comfortable as possible, as he demonstrates in the attached picture...

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.