

Friday May 22nd, Friday in Week Six 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.

Writing about the radio interview I did a month or so ago, I mused that I did wonder if I'd be thrown a curveball question such as 'Where is God in these times' and I wondered how I would have answered. The readings today really give some help in answering that question. In the first reading, Acts 18:9-18, the Lord reminded Paul that he would suffer for him, but that he should not be afraid, as God would be with him at all times, and see him through all his trials. Some of the Jews had tried to bring him before the local Roman tribunal but the proconsul would have nothing to do with their legal quibbles, never the less Paul is beaten, but remains steadfast to the Gospel, knowing he has truth on his side. And in the Gospel, John 16:20-23, Jesus reminds the Apostles – and us – that '*You will be weeping and wailing... you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy,*' just like the sorrow that turns into joy at childbirth. Your hearts will be full of joy that will not be taken from you. A faith in God, though it may be shaken by present events, gives us a way through these times of sorrow, to look forward, conscious that there will be a time of joy, just as the Apostles should look through the sorrow of the crucifixion the following day, to a time of joy, the resurrection. Many of you have spoken about how you would not be able to get through these times without prayer, and we will perhaps have a heightened gladness and thanksgiving for the time when we do eventually come together in Church again. Herein lies another answer to the question of where is God in all of us; God is present in our community of St. Bernadette's. Despite the fact that we cannot be together in person, our enjoined spirituality, prayers and masses, the work for those in need that we are still able to do, and the support that we are giving each other in any ways we can, show that Christ and his mission is still at the heart of our parish, and perhaps we are feeling that even more keenly at this time. People may find this hard to understand, and this reminds me of a passage from the Old Testament Book of Wisdom, '*The virtuous man, though he die before his time, will find rest. He has sought to please God, so God has loved him. Yet people look on, uncomprehending; it does not enter their hearts that grace and mercy await the chosen of the Lord, and protection, his holy ones.*' Or as my mother used to say, 'Thank God for faith.'

*Keep safe, O Lord, we pray,
those whom you have saved by your kindness,
that, redeemed by the passion of your Son,*

*they may rejoice in his resurrection
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.*

Let's sing together 'All My Hope on God is Founded'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2oYTtyBSxk>

Today is also the memorial of St. Rita of Cascia who was born in Italy in the fourteenth century. From her earliest years she wanted to become a nun, and frequently visited the local Augustinian Convent, but her parents had promised her in marriage to Paolo, a watchman for the town of Spoleto, to whom she bore twin sons. During their marriage Paolo became drawn into political dissensions in the city, and was eventually ambushed and murdered, swiftly followed by the death by natural causes of both her sons. Rita decided to join the Augustinian nuns – although some opposed her as they had relatives who had been involved with the political machinations that had led to the death of her husband. Nevertheless she was eventually admitted, and the last forty years of her life were given to prayer and charity. One day, whilst meditating on the Passion of Christ, a small wound appeared on her forehead, as though one of the thorns from the Crown of Thorns had pierced her flesh, and Rita bore this stigmata for the rest of her life. When she was dying she asked that a rose from her parent's garden might be brought to her. This was considered impossible as it was in the middle of winter, yet when one of the nuns went to her parent's house, there, on the rose bush was a single beautiful rose. For this reason, like St. Jude, St. Rita is Patron Saint of seemingly impossible quests. Her incorrupt body can still be venerated in the town of Cascia in central Italy.

*Holy Patroness of those Impossible Causes, Saint Rita,
so humble, pure and patient,
whose pleadings with thy Divine Spouse are irresistible,
obtain for me from thy Crucified Christ my request (mention it here).
Be kind to me,
for the greater glory of God
and I promise to honour thee and to sing the praises of God forever.
Oh glorious St. Rita,
who didst miraculously participate in the sorrowful Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ,
obtain for me the grace to suffer with resignation the troubles of this life,
and protect me in all my needs. Amen.*

Don't forget; please sign, and pass on to others, the petition to allow our Churches to open, with all necessary safety precautions. And if this seems impossible at this present time, well, let us invoke the name of St. Rita!

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

In your prayers please pray for the repose of the souls of Jean Elizabeth Sykes, whose funeral I will celebrate at Carleton at noon today, and Ronal Shepherd whose funeral I will celebrate at Carleton at 1pm this afternoon. *May they rest in the peace and love of Christ.*

In other news, you will have noticed that Tobias, the Presbytery Cat, wears a little clerical collar, a little patch of white fur, just under his chin, which he has had since being a kitten. Not long after he moved into the Presbytery, our old friend Fr. Luiz Ruscillo popped in when he was passing for a cuppa. I introduced him to Tobias and pointed out his little clerical collar, to which Fr. Luiz dryly replied, 'Well, at least someone in the house is wearing one...!'

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately. 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.