

Saturday May 23rd , Saturday in Week Six of Eastertide.

Good Morning – or Good Afternoon - 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.

Today in our reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Acts 18:23-28, we go over to Ephesus where we meet an energetic and enthusiastic follower, Apollos, *'an eloquent man, with sound knowledge of the Scriptures'* but who only knew about the baptism of John the Baptist. He converted many of the people to the way of Jesus, but did not know about the Holy Spirit, and later we see him meeting up with Paul, who will give him further instruction and baptise him in the Spirit. You can see here the formation of the Sacraments. All of the Sacraments were instituted by Jesus himself, that is to say, he originally formed them, by being baptized himself, by giving the Apostles the first Eucharist at the Last Supper, by sending down the Holy Spirit, and so on. But the Sacraments had to be formally identified by the Church, and here we see that Apollos knew about Baptism, but not about what we now know as Confirmation. On Monday we read the conclusion of this little episode, with Paul laying hands on them, and the Spirit coming down upon them, completing their initiation into the Church.

In the Gospel, John 16:23-28, Jesus continues his great discussion to his disciples - ask for anything in my name and my Father will give it to you. Remember, in loving me you love the Father who loves you. Once again here Jesus is giving us an open invitation to turn to him with all our needs. But whatever we ask of him must be done in a spirit of love, love for the Father, love for the Son, our asking inspired by the Holy Spirit. As Pope Francis said, *'No one should be afraid to turn to God with prayer, especially in times of great doubt, suffering and need. Jesus does not want people to become numb to life's problems and "extinguish" those things that make them human when they pray. He does not want us to smother our questions and requests, learning to put up with everything. Instead, he wants every pain, every apprehension to rise up to heaven and become a dialogue with God, the Father.'* It is sometimes a good exercise to examine what we are actually praying about, as it can tell us a lot about our relationship with God and with the wider world around us. Similarly if we get distracted when we pray, it is sometimes good to look at those distractions, as while they might be very trivial, they could also be important in our lives, and perhaps need to be drawn into our prayer. If we are distracted in our prayer by thinking what we are going to have tea, that might not be important. If we are distracted as to why we can't understand that God allows poverty in the world, then we

could bring that thought into our prayer, reflecting on the world, finding out what we can do, and making it a subject we need to pray about. But the invitation to ask and pray is there.

Lord, I bow my heart before You and give You honour and praise.

Oh God, strengthen my prayer life.

Help me to pray more.

Nudge me to pray when I'm doing mindless tasks.

Help me to truly know who I am in Christ,

to understand that You always hear me,

to know Your Word so I can pray it,

to write down my own prayer needs and the needs of others,

and to know that You really do know me.

In the strong name of Jesus, Amen.

For our hymn today, let's sing Mary's great prayer of thanksgiving, the Magnificat, 'Tell Out My Soul, the Greatness of the Lord.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6ji4y9Q-K0>

If you haven't already, please sign, and pass on to others, the petition to allow our Churches to open, with all necessary safety precautions.

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

I was reading in the paper this morning the plans that Weatherspoon's have for reopening, with barriers, social distancing, and in and out doors. It looks very complicated I have to say. I've received some interesting suggestions for ways of opening the Church, and the Parish Hall. One suggestion had a certain number in Church with the mass being relayed or faceted somehow to others sitting in the Hall. As I said when all this caper began, we are going to have to be very creative in our ways to get together. Please reach out to Parishioners you know who do not have access to the internet, either printing stuff out and delivering it to them, or picking them up from the porch throughout the week.

I have celebrated Mass for this Sunday, and it is available on the YouTube, or by following this link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=785nhiAL2mk&feature=youtu.be>

Ian is getting terribly proficient with this filming malarkey (we even have a change of scene today), and I'm glad his sterling efforts are being appreciated. I also attach a not very newsy newsletter, but at least you will see the mass intentions for this week, as well as the Bidding Prayers and the readings for this Sunday. If you have any requests for hymns, let me know. Many thanks for those who continue to drop their offerings in the letterbox, or have made standing orders. Your financial support at this time is much appreciated.

Finally, thank you to Ian and Catherine for the plate of Chocolate Brownies left at my door for the Feast of the Ascension! A lovely surprise to come home to.

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost. 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.