

Sunday May 24th, Seventh Sunday 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.

For the past few weeks of Eastertide we have been listening to Jesus' last sermon to the Apostles at the Last Supper, preparing them for the events of Passiontide and Easter, and the also the Ascension, the final return of Jesus to his Father. The time has come for Jesus to be glorified. His final words, John 17:1-11, are a prayer that they may share in the same eternal life that is the glory he shares with his Father. We pray that we too may receive that life as we share in the Eucharist he gave us – even if we can only receive spiritually at this time. Today's second reading echoes some of the thoughts of St. Paul this week, but this is from the First letter of St. Peter (1 Peter 4:13-16) who tells us that we are to be glad if we can have some share in the sufferings of Christ.

This morning's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Acts 1:12-14, is particularly pertinent to our present situation. After the Ascension the disciples, along with Jesus' Mother, Mary, return to Jerusalem, and head for the upper room where the Last Supper had taken place. Other than electing Matthias to replace Judas as the twelfth Apostle, all they do is pray, '*All these joined in continuous prayer.*' For the Apostles this is a time of limbo, and quiet time of waiting, unsure of what the future is to be, not knowing how to go about the mission they have been asked to take on by Christ, unable to move forward with their lives. They await the great rush of wind and fire, the power of the Holy Spirit to open the doors for them. As we wait for our doors to open, let us join with the Apostles and with our Blessed Mother Mary in their prayers;

*Ever present God,
be with us in our isolation,
be close to us in our distancing,
be healing in our sickness,
be joy in our sadness,
be light in our darkness,
be wisdom in our confusion,
be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar,
that when the doors reopen
we may with the zeal of Pentecost*

*Inhabit our communities
and speak of your goodness
to an emerging world.
Through Christ Our Lord.
Amen.*

As we enter the last week of May, let us continue to seek the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary. Hopefully it will not be too long before we can gather on Tuesday evenings for the Rosary and the Novena to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. The Miraculous Medal was introduced to the world by St. Catherine Labouré, a novice with the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul in a convent on the Rue De Bac, a tiny backstreet in central Paris. In 1830 she received a vision from Mary in which Our Lady appeared inside an oval frame which bore the inscription “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.” The Blessed Mother asked that this image be put on a medal, saying all who wear it would receive great graces. The first medals were struck in 1832. Many of those wearing them did indeed receive blessings, including cures for illnesses and seemingly miraculous conversions, and it soon became popularly known as the “Miraculous Medal.” Today, the Miraculous Medal is still a wonderful way of showing, and spreading, devotion to both our Lady and our Lord as well. I always keep a Miraculous Medal in my wallet. I have placed a bowl of medals in the porch, so please feel free to take one for yourself or family, and pray the Miraculous Medal Prayer:

*O Virgin Mother of God, Mary Immaculate,
We dedicate and consecrate ourselves to you
under the title of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.
May this Medal be for each one of us a sure sign of your affection for us
and a constant reminder of our duties toward you.
Ever while wearing it, may we be blessed by your loving protection
and preserved in the grace of your Son.
O Most Powerful Virgin, Mother of Our Saviour,
keep us close to you every moment of our lives.
Obtain for us, your children, the grace of a happy death;
so that in union with you,
we may enjoy the bliss of Heaven forever. Amen.*

However, *don't* do what a dinner lady from my childhood did when her son was going on an 18-30s holiday. In order that he should be safe, she sewed miraculous medals into the hem of his jeans – which was fine, until he had to go through the metal detector at the airport. And that's a true story.

This Sunday's Mass will be available all week on the YouTube, or by following this link.

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

If you have any requests for hymns, let me know. Envelopes for Mass Intentions are available in the porch and can be dropped off at the Presbytery anytime. Many thanks for those who continue to drop their offerings in the letterbox (which is regularly checked throughout the day), or have made standing orders. Your financial support at this time is much appreciated.

And I'm glad the Mass is being appreciated by many of you. One Parishioner phoned last tonight to say she was particularly glad to see the altar decked with beautiful flowers by Jenny and Hilary, so many thanks to them for helping to beautify the Sacred Liturgy. And whilst Tobias, the Presbytery Cat, has never shown particular desire to pray the mass, I'm glad at least one of your pets did, as you can see in the attached pic which was sent to me. St. Francis of Assisi would be pleased!

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.