

Monday May 25<sup>th</sup>, Monday in the Seventh Week 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.

As our Eastertide readings continue, Jesus finally finishes his Last Supper discourse to the Apostles, John 16:29-33, and now it is time for them to respond, and I think you can hear Jesus breathe a sigh of relief when they show they have understood, *'You know everything... you do not have to wait for questions to be put into words... we believe that you came from God.'* Jesus then goes on to tell the Apostles how they will be scattered, as they would do be at the events of the Passion, but he also tells them that *'I am not alone, because the Father is with me.'* Here Jesus is almost pardoning the Apostles for their actions at the time of the crucifixion, knowing what they will do, but telling them not to feel burdened by guilt, as he wants them to re-group and return to him as soon as they can – which they do, following the events of the resurrection. It's a little reminder to us that, whatever we have done, or whatever we are going to do, God already knows, and his forgiveness is always there for us, if we 're-group' and turn to him, and avail ourselves of his pardon and love. As individual confession is not possible at the moment, perhaps we should remind ourselves of the Act of Perfect Contrition:

*Perfect Contrition is a grace from God, so sincerely ask for this gift throughout the day prior to making your act of contrition: "My God, grant me perfect contrition for all my sins".*

*1. In reality or imagination kneel at the foot of a crucifix and say to yourself: "Jesus, my God and my Saviour, in the midst of your agony, you remembered me, you suffered for me, you wished to wipe away my sins".*

*2. Contrition is 'perfect' if you repent of your sins because you love God and are sorry for offending Him and causing the sufferings of Christ on the cross. Before the Crucified Christ remember your sins, repent of them because they have brought our Lord to His sufferings on the Cross. Promise him, that with His help, you will not sin again.*

*3. Recite, slowly and sincerely, an act of contrition focused on the goodness of God and your love of Jesus: "O my God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you and by the help of your grace I will not sin again. Amen".*

*4. Make a firm resolution to go to sacramental confession as soon as practically possible.*

And for our hymn this morning let us sing 'God forgave my sin in Jesus' name.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mo3MGpcBC5M>

Today is the Feast Day in England of St. Bede the Venerable, the only English born Doctor of the Church (St. Anselm of Canterbury is also a doctor of the Church, but he was born in Italy). Bede was probably born in Monkton, Durham. Nothing is known of his family background, but at the age of seven he was entrusted to the care of Benedict Biscop, who in 674 AD had founded the monastery of St Peter at Wearmouth. In 682 AD, Bede moved the monastery at Jarrow, where he spent the rest of his life. By the age of nineteen he had become a deacon and at the age of thirty became a priest. His scholarship covered a huge range of subjects, including commentaries on the bible, and observations on nature, music and poetry. His most famous work, which is a key source for the understanding of early British history and the arrival of Christianity, is 'Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum' or 'The Ecclesiastical History of the English People' which was completed in 731 AD. Bede died in his cell at the monastery in May 735 AD. One of his most famous prayers seems particularly pertinent to these times, especially with the rainbow symbol being used to celebrate the work of our key carers;

*O Christ, our Morning Star,  
Splendour of Light Eternal,  
shining with the glory of the rainbow,  
come and waken us  
from the greyness of our apathy,  
and renew in us your gift of hope.  
Amen.*

Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History of the English People' is hugely important as it is the first work of history in which the BC 'Before Christ' and AD 'Anno Domini' system of dating is used. Bede did not invent the system, but his usage, and the popularity of his work brought it into common usage, especially when his manuscripts became famous in Europe. Of course you may now have heard that some people instead are using 'BCE' 'Before the Common Era' and 'CE' 'Common Era' to define the years – I've noticed it a lot on the BBC, not least on 'University Challenge'. Looking into this the BBC website says '*In line with modern practice [bbc.co.uk/religion](http://bbc.co.uk/religion) uses BCE/CE (Before Common Era/Common Era) as a religiously neutral alternative to BC/AD. As the BBC is committed to impartiality it is appropriate that we use terms that do not offend or alienate non-Christians.*' Well, it ain't my 'modern practice' and I hope it's not yours. 'BC' and 'AD' at least mean something, and the fact that this desire for 'religious neutrality' actually comes from their religious website is quite worrying. No doubt there'll be an edict from Parliament soon telling us we have to use the new terminology in our schools, lest we offend anyone. If they don't like the terms perhaps they should get rid of the whole Gregorian Calendar system that we use, as it was promulgated by Pope St. Gregory the Great. And who has actually said they are offended by a linguistic usage from the eighth century? And their new notation, whilst obliterating Christ, still stems from the suggested year of his birth. It's

another occasion where we have to stand up for Christianity, and object to its being whitewashed from our language, our country, and our Broadcasting Corporation.

Rant over. And I got through it without using the phrase '*political correctness gone mad!*' but I was tempted!

So here's a prayer which is actually for the start of a New Year but is appropriate for any time of the year – the Year of the Lord, AD.

*May the Lord make my Year a happy one.*

*Not by shielding me from sorrow and pain,*

*but by strengthening me to bear it if it comes.*

*Not by making my path easy,*

*but by making me sturdy enough to tread any path.*

*Not by taking hardship from me,*

*but by taking all cowardice and fear from my heart as I meet hardships.*

*Not by granting me unbroken sunshine,*

*but by keeping my face bright even in the shadows.*

*Not by making my life always pleasant,*

*but by showing me where the world and its causes need me most*

*and by making me zealous to be there and to help.*

*God, make my year a happy one.*

It's a beautiful sunny bank holiday, so I hope you can make the most of it in the best way you can.

In other news, Tobias, the Presbytery Cat, would like to remind you all of the importance during these times of making sure you eat your five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. He's very partial to a banana, as you can see in the attached picture. At least I think he is...

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.