

Thursssday June 25th, Thursday of Week 12 in ordinary Time Year II

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 trust everyone continues to pray for all our needs at this time.

Today our Old Testament history, II Kings, 24:8-17, takes us to the beginning of the great Exile of the Chosen People in Babylon, where their faith was going to be strongly tested. When Josiah died the leaders went back to their evil ways again. Now the Babylonians were in power, under their great leader King Nebuchadnezzar. Jerusalem was besieged and captured and the chief citizens brought into exile. The Temple was also desecrated. Only the poor were left behind, and Zedekiah was put on the throne.

Today's Gospel Reading, Matthew 7:21-29, brings to a close the Sermon on the Mount. We hopefully all know that this sermon begins with the Beatitudes, I suspect fewer of us would be able to say what the ending is although it is a story that should be familiar to us, the house built on rock and the house built on sand and how they coped in the face of storms. I actually based the children's video this Monday on this parable, using a game of Jenga! Perhaps we can think of our experiences of the past few months as a storm, perhaps one of the fiercest storms that we have had to face in our lives. So we might well ask ourselves, are we still standing firm in our faith in the Lord? Many of you have told me that you have prayed more in the past few months than ever – that is building a firm foundation for whatever life is throwing at us in these times.

No doubt when the people heard Jesus give the Sermon on the Mount they will have gone away thinking and saying to one another 'wow, incredible, new teaching.' But how many of those people decided to act on them and put them into practice. It is that which is the difference between being built on rock and being built on sand. We pray that we may always listen for the voice of the Lord, but we pray especially that having heard his word we be able to put it into practice – only this way can have the authority to go on and teach those words to others.

*Lord, I'm here today with open hands and an open heart,
ready to depend on you to help me through the day and all it will bring my way.*

*Help me to build my house on rock,
help me come to you for guidance, strength, provision and protection.*

As I face tough choices and hard situations, help me remember your love and goodness,

*help me remember that I am Your child
and Your representative to the world around me.
Help me live today in a way that brings honour to Your holy name.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Today is the Optional Memorial of St. Cyril of Alexandria, a Bishop and Doctor of the Church who was born in 376AD and succeeded his Uncle to become Bishop of Alexandria in 412. In the early part of his life as a Bishop, Cyril was quite a forthright angry man, very impulsive, inclined to act rather than think, violently opposing those factions he considered to be enemies of the Church, pillaging and destroying the Churches of others faiths, and expelling the Jews from Alexandria. He seemed in his dotage to calm down, however, and his importance here lies in his theological arguments. At the time there was a teacher named Nestorius who claimed that in Jesus there were two distinct persons, a divine person and a human person. Nestorius would not agree to the title 'Mother of God' for Mary, insisting on 'Mother of Christ.' He said Mary was not the mother of God but only of the man Christ, whose humanity was only a temple of God. Nestorianism implied that the humanity of Christ was a mere disguise for the God, God 'dressed up' as a man. Presiding as the pope's representative at the Council of Ephesus in 431, Cyril condemned Nestorianism and proclaimed Mary truly the 'Mother of God', in Greek 'Theotokos', the mother of the one Person who is truly God and truly human, one of his arguments being that the Church, the people, had considered and called Mary 'Mother of God' from its earliest days. In the confusion that followed, Cyril was deposed and imprisoned for three months, after which he was welcomed back to Alexandria, while Nestorius went into exile. He died in 444AD, and declared a doctor of the Church by Pope Leo XIII in 1882.

*O God, who made the Bishop Saint Cyril of Alexandria
an invincible champion of the divine motherhood
of the most Blessed Virgin Mary,
grant, we pray, that we, who believe she is truly the Mother of God,
may be saved through the Incarnation of Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever. Amen.*

As you know, I do like my quiz shows (I was furious last week when 'Tipping Point' was cancelled for the racing) and one question, which often comes up in various guises refers to the size of Champagne bottles. I mention it this morning as today in the First Reading, as you saw above, we were introduced to the King Nebuchadnezzar who gives his name to the one of the largest champagne bottle sizes. All of the large format Champagne bottle sizes are named after biblical kings and figures, although nobody seems to know why. Here's a handy guide, which may be useful if you are ever quizzing, or if you ever have something to celebrate:

Standard bottle (0.75 litres)

Magnum (1.5 litres) 2 standard bottles. Latin for 'great'.

Jeroboam (3 litres) 4 standard bottles worth. The name comes from the first king of Israel in 9th century BC.

Rehoboam (4.5 litres) 6 standard bottles. The name of the son of King Solomon and grandson of King David, the term means 'he who enlarges the people.' He was king of Israel in 10th century BC.

Methuselah (6 litres) 8 standard bottles. The oldest man mentioned in the Bible, who was believed to be 969 years old and died around the time of the Great Flood that floated the Ark built by Noah.

Salmanazar (9 litres) 12 standard bottles. An Assyrian emperor that lived in the 9th century BC.

Balthazar (12 litres) 16 standard bottles. One of the Three Wise Men who followed the Star of Bethlehem to the nativity.

Nebuchadnezzar (15 litres) 20 standard bottles and a whopping 83.5 lbs in weight. A Babylonian King.

Melchior (18 litres) 24 standard bottles. Again, one of the Three Wise Men, who might have been the Magi to give the baby Jesus gold.

Solomon (20 litres) 26 standard bottles. The third king of Israel as well as the son of David. He is a prophet in both the Talmud and the Quran.

Primat or Goliath (27 litres) 36 standard bottles. Goliath of course was the giant Philistine warrior that a young King David had to face in the famous Bible story.

Melchizedek (30 litres) – 40 standard bottles. The biggest in the world. This bottle weighs around 170lbs. Melchizedek was King of Salem and High Priest.

So when the pubs open again, you'll know exactly what to order, although it might be hard to keep social distancing after so much of the fizzy stuff!

No word of how we are to open our Churches, but as soon as I hear anything I will let you know. The Church will be open for private prayer this Sunday from 1-4pm again, as well as Wednesday from 12-1pm. I will be floating around, so if you want a word or individual absolution, just bang on the sacristy door.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Karen Gregory, whose funeral I will be celebrating at Carleton Crematorium this afternoon. *May her soul, and the souls of the faithful departed, rest in peace. Amen.* Now united with her mother, Pat, Karen's favourite hymn was most definitely, 'Make

Me a Channel of Your Peace', so let us make that our hymn today

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihhvm6eLWZI>

In other news, once again the Lord is most definitely providing the most beautiful weather for our walks along the prom or our queueing outside the Garden Centre. And if it gets even too warm to queue outside Mr. Manfredi's for a refreshing ice cream, don't worry, as he can now come to you! So if you see this chap riding about stop him and buy one!

Mass for the Twelfth Sunday of the Year is available on the YouTube at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN0e_G6n4AE&feature=youtu.be

The official link for the Mass Sheet is

https://www.rpbooks.co.uk/_uploads/www.rpbooks.co.uk/14_12inOrdinaryTimeA.pdf

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost (or kind of bunched up). 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, most of the time. 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.