

Tuesday May 26<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday 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.

And I hope you all had a jolly bank holiday, although, as a friend remarked to me yesterday 'every day seems like a bank holiday!'

In today's first reading, Acts 20:17-27, after many ups and down in Ephesus Paul now had to leave. He tells of the premonitions he has about being a prisoner for the Lord, and is well aware of the persecutions that await him. But he must still bear witness to the Good News. He also says that with a good conscience he knows that he has done all that God called him to do '*put before you the whole of God's purpose.*' No matter that people have not always listened, or that they have persecuted and imprisoned him for the Gospel he preached, he has had a job to do for Jesus and has done it.

Whilst Jesus has finished all he wanted to say to the Apostles, now, the night before he died, Jesus prays to his Father, John 17:1-11. Chapters earlier in the Gospel of St. John, at the Wedding at Cana, when Mary told her Son that they had run out of wine, Jesus replied 'My hour has not yet come.' Now, hours before the crucifixion Jesus prays to his Father, '*the hour has come to glorify your son - I have glorified you on earth, and finished the work you gave me to do.*' He then prays for his disciples and each one of us '*they belong to you.*' Let us pray, with Jesus, to the Father;

*Almighty God, my Eternal Father,  
from the fullness of my soul I adore You.  
I am deeply grateful that You have made me  
in Your image and likeness,  
and that You ever hold me in Your loving embrace.  
Direct me to love You with all my heart,  
with all my soul,  
and with my whole mind.  
Direct me to love all Your children as I love myself.  
O, my Father, my soul longs to be united to You,  
and to rest in You forever.  
Have the Holy Spirit touch my soul*

*so that I may love You as He does,  
and as Your Beloved Son Jesus does.*

*Amen.*

And for today's hymn, together let us sing 'Abba father, you are the potter, we are the clay.'

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

And today is the Feast St. Philip Neri. Philip was born in Florence in 1515, the son of a wealthy businessman. He was a cheery child, known as 'good little Pip', and this cheeriness and a general love for those around him was a feature throughout the whole of his life. Not being bothered about his Father's money, Philip went to Rome where he lived as a lay person seeking to help others in any kind of need, living out the Gospel values and preaching by his work. He would visit hospitals, at first alone, then bringing others, eventually going into all parts of the city and encouraging those around him to take up lay ministry. In 1551 Philip was ordained Priest, and continued his work of gathering people together to work and preach, and pray. He toyed with the idea of going to preach in India, but was given the vision of Rome as a desert in which he needed to pray and preach, which he did, becoming known as 'The Apostle of Rome.' Some of Philip's followers became priests and lived together in community. This was the beginning of the Oratory, the religious institute he founded. A feature of their life was a daily afternoon service of four informal talks, with hymns and prayers, said and sung in Italian rather than Latin. St Philip lived opposite the English College in Rome at S. Girolamo della Carità and used to greet the students with the words 'Salvete Flores Martyrum,' 'Hail! flowers of the Martyrs.' In a picture on the wall of the chapel in the English College in Rome, he is shown blessing the seminarians before they return to England to minister to the Catholic faithful at a time when this was illegal; many of these priests died as martyrs, executed by the State, hence his greeting to them. To this day, the College maintains its link with the much loved saint by celebrating mass on his feast day at the Santa Maria in Vallicella (also called Chiesa Nuova), the principal church of the Oratorians, a religious congregation of secular priests founded by St Philip Neri. After spending a day hearing confessions and receiving visitors, Philip Neri suffered a haemorrhage and died on the feast of Corpus Christi in 1595. He was beatified in 1615 and canonized in 1622. As well as being one of the Patrons of Rome, Philip is also the Patron Saint of joy and humour due to his jolly temperament. What a lovely thing to be remembered for!

*O holy St Philip Neri, patron saint of joy,  
you who trusted Scripture's promise that the Lord is always at hand  
and that we need not to have anxiety about anything:  
In your compassion heal our worries and sorrows  
and lift the burdens from our hearts.  
We come to you as one whose heart swells  
with abundant love for God and all creation.*

*Hear us, we pray, especially in this present time of need.  
Keep us safe through your loving intercession,  
and may the joy of the Holy Spirit which filled your heart, St Philip,  
transform our lives and bring us peace.  
Amen.*

When I was in Rome, and we had our annual Mass at the Chiesa Nuova, I would often act as page turner for the organist. To get to the organ loft, you had to climb to the top of the Presbytery, walk across the roof, and then lower yourself down a stepladder. It wasn't for the faint-hearted!

Time for a cuppa and let's see what the rest of the day holds. Through the intercession of St. Philip, let us pray it is filled with joy.

Don't forget, if you are passing the Church, there is a bowl of Miraculous Medals, which you are welcome to take for yourself, and friends and family.

In other news, whilst Tobias, the Presbytery Cat did remind you yesterday to eat your greens, he also recommends a little bit of chocolate to sweeten the day. Or maybe a big bit.

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.