

Wednesday May 27th, Feast of St. Augustine of Canterbury

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 hope everyone is praying together for our all our intentions in this time of need.

It's another beautiful day – we are truly being blessed by the weather in these strange days of having to queue outside Sainsbury or wait in line for one of Mr. Manfredi's delicious Italian Ice Creams.

And today in England we are celebrating the Feast Day of St. Augustine of Canterbury.

St Augustine was the Benedictine Prior of the Abbey of St Andrew in Rome when he was chosen by Pope Gregory the Great, in 596, to lead a mission to Britain and bring Christianity to the then Kingdom of Kent. About thirty monks under the leadership of Augustine set off, but on their way they were warned that the English, the 'Angles,' would not receive them, and they returned to Rome. Gregory persuaded them to try again telling them that 'they are not Angles, they are Angels.' So they set off again, and arrived in Kent in 597.

The King of Kent, King Ethelbert, was married to Princess Bertha, daughter of one of the Kings of the Franks (France). She was a Christian and as a condition of her marriage, she brought a Bishop from France to Kent. Ethelbert was a pagan but he allowed his wife religious freedom. He also permitted St Augustine to settle and preach in Canterbury and use the Church of St Martin for services. Within a year of his arrival, St Augustine had converted King Ethelbert to Christianity and thereafter, many others followed. On one occasion the numbers were so great that a mass baptism of thousands occurred on Christmas day in 597. Augustine purified and consecrated many pagan temples for Christian worship and rebuilt the ancient church in Canterbury, becoming the first Archbishop of Canterbury. He died seven years later, and was immediately revered as a Saint. He is one of the Patron Saints of England, hence today being a Feast Day.

O Lord our God,

who by your Son Jesus Christ called your Apostles

and sent them forth to preach the Gospel to the nations:

we bless your holy name for your servant Augustine, first Archbishop of Canterbury,

whose labours in propagating your Church among the English people we commemorate;

and we pray that all whom you call and send

*may do your will, and bide your time, and see your glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen*

So today let us sing 'I Vow To Thee My Country' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6ZvylOSy5A>

I found this beautiful prayer of St. Augustine for the Sick, although I have a suspicion that is by the 'other' St. Augustine – St. Augustine of Hippo, but I am sure neither of them will mind if I reproduce it here.

*Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight,
and give Your angels and saints charge over those who sleep.
Tend Your sick ones, O Lord Christ.
Rest Your weary ones.
Bless Your dying ones.
Soothe Your suffering ones.
Pity Your afflicted ones.
Shield Your joyous ones,
and all for Your love's sake. Amen*

The Gospel for today's Feast is taken from St Luke 10:1-9 in which Jesus sends seventy-two disciples out into the world on their first missionary tour. Seventy-two corresponded to the number of nations there were reckoned to be in the world. Jesus tells them '*The harvest is rich, but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest.*' It is a prayer we should often say for Vocations, not just to the priesthood, but to the religious life, and for an active laity. This is going to be more necessary than ever when we come back to together.

*Lord God, the harvest is rich but the labourers are few.
You call each one of us by name and ask us to follow you.
Give each one of us the courage to respond generously to your call.
We pray for those who now minister to your people in all areas of life.
Dedicate them to yourself.
Open our minds and hearts that we may accept your challenge
of continuing the work of the Good Shepherd.
Call from among us sisters, brothers, deacons and priests, and active laity
to serve our communities.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

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. I have also left some sealed bottles of Holy Water, on the table opposite the R.I.P board.

And finally congratulations to Louise, who reads at Saturday night Mass, and who today is celebrating her eighteenth birthday! Many happy returns, and we hope you have a suitably jolly quarantined birthday!

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.

P.S. News is just in that on Saturday evening we are all encouraged to say the Rosary to End the Pandemic, with the Pope Live streaming from his grotto in the Vatican at 18:30 UK time. I'll have more details tomorrow.